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Mr. Clifton of Barrington


A POPULAR NOVEL.

BY

MRS. J. F. REICHHARD.



NEW YORK:
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MR. CLIFTON OF BARRINGTON

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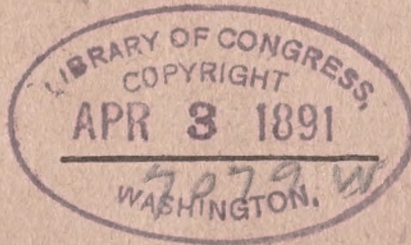
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NEW YORK.
J. S. OGILVIE, PUBLISHER,
57 ROSE STREET.

MR. CLIFTON OF BARRINGTON.

CHAPTER I.

IN an easy-chair of the handsome library of his town-house sat William Barrington. His hair *was* gray, the smoothness of his expansive brow was defaced by premature wrinkles, and his once attractive face bore the pale, unmistakable look of dissipation. One of his feet was cased in folds of linen as it rested on the soft velvet ottoman, speaking of gout as plainly as any foot ever spoke yet. It would seem, to look at the man as he sat there, that he had grown old before his time. And so he had. His years were barely forty-nine, yet in all save years he was an aged man.

A noted character had been William Barrington. Not that he had been a renowned politician, or a great general, or an eminent statesman, or even an active member of Congress; not for any of these had his name been in the mouths of men. But for the most reckless among the reckless, for the spendthrift among spendthrifts, for the gamester above all gamesters, and for a gay man outstripping the gay—by these characteristics did the world know William Barrington. It was said his faults were those of his head, that a better heart or a more generous spirit never beat in human form; and there was much truth in this. It had been well for him had he lived and died a poor law student. Up to his twenty-fifth year he had been industrious, and steady, and very ambitious, and he knew that on his own talents and exertions must depend his rising in the world.

He was of excellent family, but poor. It never dawned upon his mind that there was a possibility of his having a fortune left to him, when one morning he awoke to find himself the lawful possessor of sixty thousand a year. His first idea was that he should never be able to spend the

money—that such a sum, year by year, could not be spent. It was a wonder his head was not turned by adulation at the onset, for he was courted, flattered, and caressed by all classes.

He became the attractive man of the day, the lion in society; for, independent of his newly acquired wealth, he was of distinguished appearance and fascinating manners. But unfortunately the prudence which had sustained William Barrington, the poor law student, entirely forsook the wealthy William, and he commenced his career on a scale of speed so great that all staid people said he was going to ruin and the deuce headlong.

But one who has sixty thousand a year does not go to ruin in a day. There sat William in his library now, in his forty-ninth year, and ruin had not come yet—that is, it had not overwhelmed him. But the embarrassments which had clung to him and been the destruction of his tranquillity, the bane of his existence—who shall describe them? The public knew them pretty well, his private friends knew better, his creditors best; but none save himself knew, or could ever know, the worrying torment that was his portion, well-nigh driving him to distraction. Years ago, by dint of looking things steadily in the face and by economizing, he might have retrieved his position; but he had done what most people do in such cases—put off the evil day and gone on increasing his enormous list of debts. The hour of exposure and ruin was now advancing fast.

Perhaps William Barrington was thinking so, as he sat there before an enormous mass of papers which strewed the library-table. His thoughts were of the past. That was a foolish match of his—that match for love—foolish so far as prejudice went; but she had been an affectionate wife to him, and had borne with his follies and his neglect, had been an admirable mother to their only child—one child alone had been theirs—and in her thirteenth year the mother had died, and—

“If you please, sir,” said a servant, entering the room and interrupting his thoughts, “a gentleman is asking to see you.”

“Who?” cried Mr. Barrington, sharply, not perceiving the card the man was bringing.

No unknown person, although wearing the externals of

a foreign ambassador, was ever admitted unceremoniously to the presence of Mr. Barrington. Years of duns had taught the servants caution.

"His card is here. It is Mr. Clifton, of Clifton Manor."

"Mr. Clifton, of Clifton Manor!" groaned Mr. Barrington, whose foot just then had an awful twinge. "What does he want? Show him up."

The servant did as he was bid, and introduced Mr. Clifton.

Look at the visitor well, reader, for he will play his part in this history. He was a tall man of remarkably noble presence for a man of twenty-seven; he was somewhat given to stooping his head when he spoke to any one shorter than himself. It was a peculiar habit, almost to be called a bowing habit, and his father had possessed it before him. When told of it he would laugh and say he was unconscious of doing it. His features were good, his complexion was pale and clear, his hair dark, and his full eyelids drooped over his deep gray eyes. Altogether it was a countenance that both men and women liked to look upon—the index of an honorable, sincere nature—not that it would have been called a handsome face, so much as a pleasing and distinguished one. Though but the son of a country lawyer, and destined to be a lawyer himself, he had received the training of a gentleman. He advanced at once to Mr. Barrington in the straightforward way of a man of business—of a man who has come on business.

"Mr. Barrington," said the latter, holding out his hand—he was always deemed the most affable gentleman of the age.

"I am happy to see you. You perceive I can not rise, at least without great pain and inconvenience. My enemy, the gout, has possession of me again. Take a seat. Are you staying in town?"

"I have just arrived from Clifton Manor. The chief object of my journey was to see you, Mr. Barrington."

"What can I do for you?" asked Mr. Barrington, uneasily; for a suspicion now crossed his mind that Mr. Clifton might be acting for some one of his many troublesome creditors.

Mr. Clifton drew his chair nearer to Mr. Barrington, and spoke in a low tone.

"A rumor came to my ears, sir, that the Barrington estate was in the market."

"A moment, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Barrington, with reserve, not to say *hauteur*, in his tone, for his suspicions were gaining ground. "Are we to converse confidentially together, as men of honor, or is there something concealed behind?"

"I do not understand you," said Mr. Clifton.

"In a word—excuse my speaking plainly, but I must feel my ground—are you here on the part of some of my rascally creditors to pump information out of me that otherwise they would not get?"

"Mr. Barrington," uttered the visitor, "I should be incapable of so dishonorable an action. I know that a lawyer gets credit for possessing but lax notions on the score of honor, but you can scarcely suspect that I should be guilty of underhand work toward you. I never was guilty of a mean trick in my life, to my recollection, and I do not think now, at the age of twenty-seven, I will undertake to do one."

"Pardon me, Mr. Clifton. If you knew half the tricks and ruses played upon me, you would not wonder at me suspecting all the world. Proceed with your business."

"I heard that the Barrington estate was for private sale; your agent dropped half a word in confidence. If so, I should wish to be the purchaser."

"For whom?" inquired Mr. Barrington.

"Myself."

"You!" laughed Mr. Barrington. "Egad, lawyering can't be such bad work, Clifton."

"Nor is it," rejoined Mr. Clifton, "with an extensive first-class connection such as ours. But you must remember that a good fortune was left me by my uncle, and a large one by my father."

"I know, the proceeds of lawyering also."

"Not altogether. My mother brought a fortune on her marriage, and it enabled my father to speculate successfully; I have been looking about for an eligible property to invest my money upon, and the Barrington estate will suit me well, provided I can have the refusal of it and we can agree about terms."

Mr. Barrington mused a few moments before he spoke.

"Mr. Clifton," he began, "my affairs are very bad, and

ready money I must find somewhere. Now, the Barrington estate is not entailed, neither is it mortgaged to anything like its value, though the latter fact, as you may imagine, is not patent to the world. When I bought it at a bargain eighteen years ago you were the lawyer on the other side, I remember."

"My father," smiled Mr. Clifton; "I was a child at the time."

"Of course, I ought to have said your father. By selling the Barrington estate a few thousands will come into my hands, after claims on it are settled; I have no other means of raising funds, and that is why I have resolved to part with it. But, now understand, if it were known that the Barrington estate is going from me I should have a hornet's nest about my ears; so that it must be disposed of privately. Do you comprehend?"

"Perfectly," replied Mr. Clifton.

"I would as soon you bought it as any one else, if, as you say, we can agree about terms."

"What do you expect for it at a rough estimate?"

"For particulars I must refer you to my men of business, Messrs. Stevenson & Taylor. Not less than three hundred and fifty thousand."

"Too much, Mr. Barrington!" cried Mr. Clifton, decisively.

"And that's not its value," returned Mr. Barrington. "These forced sales never do fetch their value," answered the plain-speaking lawyer.

"Until this hint was given me by Woodbridge, I had thought the Barrington estate was settled on your daughter."

"There's nothing settled on her," rejoined Mr. Barrington, the contraction of his brow standing out more plainly. "That comes of thoughtless runaway marriages. I fell in love with General Milton's daughter, and she went away with me, like a fool; that is, we were both fools together for our pains. The general objected to me, and said I must sow my wild oats before he would give me Helena; so we ran away, and she became my wife without a settlement. It was an unfortunate affair, taking one thing with another. When her elopement was made known to the general it killed him—"

"Killed him?" interrupted Mr. Clifton.

“It did. He had disease of the heart, and the excitement brought on the crisis. My poor wife was never happy from that hour; she blamed herself for her father’s death, and I believe it led to her own. She was ill for years; the doctors called it consumption, but it was more like wasting away, and a consumption never had been in her family. No luck ever attends runaway marriages; I have noticed it since, in many—many instances; something bad is sure to turn up from it.”

“There might have been a settlement executed after the marriage,” observed Mr. Clifton, for the old gentleman stopped and seemed lost in thought.

“I know there might; but there was not. My wife had possessed no fortune; I was already deep in my career of extravagance, and neither of us thought of making provision for our future children; and if we thought of it, we did not do it. There is an old saying, Mr. Clifton, that what may be done at any time is never done.”

Mr. Clifton bowed.

“So my child is portionless,” resumed Mr. Barrington, with a suppressed sigh. “The thought that it may be an embarrassing thing for her, were I to die before she is settled in life, crosses my mind when I am in a serious mood. That she will marry well there is little doubt, for she possesses beauty in a rare degree, and has been reared as a good girl should be, not to frivolity and foppery; she was trained by her mother (who, save for the mad act she was persuaded to do by me, was all goodness and refinement) for twelve years of her life, and since then by an admirable governess. No fear that she will decamp on a runaway marriage.”

“She was a very lovely child,” observed the lawyer; “I remember that.”

“Ay, you have seen her at Barrington in her mother’s life-time. But to return to business. If you become the purchaser of the Barrington estate, Mr. Clifton, it must be under the rose. The money that it brings, after paying off the mortgage, I must have, as I tell you, for private use; and you know that I should not be able to touch a penny of it if the confounded public got an inkling of the transfer. The world must know that I am the proprietor of Barrington, at least for some little time afterward. Perhaps you will not object to that.”

Mr. Clifton considered before replying, and then the conversation was resumed, when it was decided that he should see Stevenson & Taylor the first thing in the morning and confer with them. It was growing late when he arose to leave.

“Stay and dine with me,” said Mr. Barrington.

Mr. Clifton hesitated, and looked down at his dress—a plain, gentlemanly morning attire, but certainly not a dinner costume.

“Oh, that’s nothing; we shall be quite alone except my daughter. Mrs. Melborne, of The Pines, is staying with us; she came up to present my child at the last Drawing-room, but I think I heard something about her dining out to-day. If not, we will have it by ourselves here. Oblige me by touching the bell, Mr. Clifton.”

The servant entered.

“Inquire whether Mrs. Melborne dines at home,” said Mr. Barrington.”

“Mrs. Melborne dines out, sir,” was the man’s immediate reply. “The carriage is at the door now.”

“Very well, Mr. Clifton remains.”

At seven o’clock the dinner was announced, and Mr. Barrington wheeled into the adjoining room. As he and Mr. Clifton entered it at one door, some one else came in by the opposite door. Who—what was it? Mr. Clifton looked, not quite sure whether it was a human being; he almost thought it more like an angel. A light, graceful, girlish form, a face of surpassing beauty—beauty that is rarely seen, save from the imagination of a painter—dark shining waves of hair falling over the delicate brow, her arms decorated with pearls, and a costly dress of white lace; altogether the vision did indeed look to the lawyer as one from a fairer world than this.

“My daughter, Mr. Clifton, Hazel Barrington.”

They took their seats at the table, Mr. Barrington at its head, in spite of his gout and foot-stool, and the young lady and Mr. Clifton opposite each other. Mr. Clifton had not deemed himself an admirer of woman’s beauty, but the extraordinary loveliness of the young girl before him nearly took away his senses and his self-possession. Yet it was not so much the perfect contour of the exquisite features that struck him, the rich damask of the delicate cheek, or the luxuriant hair; no, it was the sweet

expression of the soft dark eyes. Never in his life had he seen eyes so pleasing. He could not keep his gaze from her, and he became conscious as he became more familiar with her face that there was in its character a sad, sorrowful look; only at times was it to be noticed—when the features were in repose—and it lay chiefly in the very eyes he was admiring. Never does this unconsciously mournful expression exist but it is a sure index to sorrow and suffering; but Mr. Clifton understood it not. And who could connect sorrow with the anticipated brilliant future of Hazel Barrington?

“Hazel, I see you are dressed for the evening.”

“Yes, papa, not to keep Mrs. Melborne waiting; she went to dine with some friends, and I am to call for her on my way to the ball.”

“I hope you will not be late to-night, Hazel.”

“It depends upon Mrs. Melborne.”

“Then I am sure you will be. When the young ladies in this fashionable world of ours turn night into day, it’s a bad thing for their roses. What say you, Mr. Clifton?”

Mr. Clifton glanced at the roses on the cheeks opposite to him; they looked too fresh and bright to fade lightly.

At the conclusion of the meal a maid entered the room with a white down mantle, placing it over the shoulders of her young lady, as she said the carriage was waiting.

“Good-bye, papa.”

“Good-night, my darling,” he answered, drawing her sweet face toward him and kissing it. “Tell Mrs. Melborne I will not have you kept out till morning hours. You are but a child yet. Mr. Clifton, will you ring? I am debarred from seeing my daughter to the carriage.”

“If you will allow me—if Miss Barrington will pardon the attendance of one little used to wait upon young ladies, I shall be proud to see her to her carriage,” was the somewhat confused answer of Mr. Clifton, as he touched the bell.

Mr. Barrington thanked him and the young lady smiled, and Mr. Clifton conducted her down the broad, lighted staircase, and stood bareheaded by the door of the luxurious carriage and handed her in. She put out her hand in her frank, pleasant manner, as she wished him good-night. The carriage rolled on its way, and Mr. Clifton returned to the library.

"Well, is she not a handsome girl?" demanded the old gentleman.

"Handsome is not the word for beauty such as hers," was Mr. Clifton's reply, in a low, warm tone. "I never saw a face half so beautiful!"

"She caused quite a sensation at the last grand reception last week, as I hear. This everlasting gout kept me in-doors all day. And she is as good as she is beautiful."

The father of this beautiful girl was not partial. Hazel Barrington was wondrously gifted by nature, not only in mind and person, but in heart. She was as little like a fashionable young lady as was well possible to be, partly because she had hitherto been secluded from the great world, partly from the care bestowed upon her training. During the life-time of her mother she had lived mostly on the Barrington estate; since her mother's death she had remained under the charge of a judicious governess. Generous and benevolent, she was timid and sensitive to a degree, gentle and considerate to all. Could the fate that was to overtake this child have been foreseen by her father he would have struck her down to death, in his love, as she stood before him, rather than suffer her to enter upon it.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN Hazel drew up to the house of Mrs. Melborne's friend she found that lady was not quite ready, and as she entered the spacious parlors of the St. Clare mansion the dinner guests were just entering also. Hazel was quick to perceive at the moment a young and elegant man among the guests. He was deemed handsome, with his clearly cut features, his dark eyes, his raven-black hair, and his white teeth; but to a keen observer those features had not an attractive expression, and the dark eyes had a great knack of looking away while he spoke to you. It was Captain Redmond St. Clare. Few men were so fascinating in manners (at times and seasons), in face and form; few men won so completely upon their hearers' ears, and few were so heartless in their heart of hearts. The world courted him, and society honored him because he was rich.

Mrs. St. Clare comes forward to greet the young lady, and at the same time introduces the captain to Hazel. They

both acknowledge the introduction; Hazel, yet a child in ways of the world, blushed crimson at the admiring looks cast upon her by the young captain. Strange—strange that she should make the acquaintance of those two men in one day, almost in the same hour; the two of all the human race who were to exercise so powerful an influence over her future life.

“That’s a pretty cross, Hazel,” said Mrs. St. Clare, as Hazel stood by her when she and Mrs. Melborne were about to depart for the ball.

She alluded to a golden cross, set with seven emeralds, which Hazel wore on her neck. It was of light, delicate texture, and was suspended from a thin, short gold chain.

“Is it not pretty?” answered Hazel. “It was given me by my dear mamma just before she died. I will take it off for you; I only wear it upon great occasions.”

This, her first appearance at a grand ball, seemed a very great occasion to this inexperienced girl. She unclasped the chain, and placed it with the cross in the hands of Mrs. St. Clare.

“Why, I declare! you have nothing on but that cross and some rubbishing pearl bracelets,” uttered Mrs. Melborne to Hazel. “I did not look at you before.”

“Mamma gave me both; the bracelets are those she used frequently to wear.”

“You old-fashioned child! Because your mamma wore those bracelets year ago, is that a reason for your doing so?” retorted Mrs. Melborne. “Why did you not put on your diamonds?”

“I—did—put on my diamonds; but—I—took them off again,” stammered Hazel.

“What on earth for?”

“I did not like to look too fine,” answered Hazel, with a laugh and a blush. “They glittered so I feared it might be thought I had put them on to look fine.”

“Ah! I see you mean to set up in that class of people who pretend to despise ornaments,” scornfully remarked Mrs. Melborne. “It is the refinement of affectation, Miss Barrington.”

The sneer fell harmlessly on Hazel’s ear. She only believed something had put Mrs. Melborne out of temper. It certainly had; and that something, though Hazel little suspected it, was the evident admiration Captain St. Clare

evinced for her fresh young beauty; it quite absorbed him, and rendered him neglectful even of Mrs. Melborne.

"Here, Hazel, take your cross," said Mrs. St. Clare. "It is very pretty; prettier on your neck than diamonds would be. You don't want embellishing; never mind what Mrs. Melborne says."

Captain St. Clare took the cross and chain from her hand to pass it to Hazel. Whether he was awkward, or whether her hands were full, for she held her gloves, her handkerchief, and had just taken up her mantle, certain it is that it fell, and the gentleman in his too quick efforts to regain it managed to set his foot upon it, and the cross was broken in two.

"There! Now whose fault was that?" cried Mrs. St. Clare.

Hazel did not answer; her heart was full. She took the broken cross, and the tears dropped from her eyes; she could not help it.

"Why! you are not crying over a stupid bauble of a cross!" uttered Mrs. Melborne, interrupting Captain St. Clare's expression of regret at his awkwardness.

"You can have it mended, dear," interposed Mrs. St. Clare.

Hazel chased away the tears, and turned to Captain St. Clare with a cheerful look.

"Pray do not blame yourself," she good-naturedly said; "the fault was as much mine as it was yours; and, as your aunt says, I can get it mended."

She disengaged the upper part of the cross from the chain as she spoke, and clasped the latter around her throat.

"You will not go with that thin string of gold on, and nothing else?" uttered Mrs. Melborne.

"Why not?" ventured Hazel. "If people say anything, I can tell them that an accident happened to the cross."

Mrs. Melborne burst into a laugh of mocking ridicule.

"If people say anything!" she repeated, in a tone according with the laugh. "They are not likely to say anything, but they will deem Mr. William Barrington's daughter unfortunately short of jewelry."

Hazel smiled, and shook her head.

"They saw my diamonds at the grand reception."

"If you had done such an awkward thing for me, Redmond St. Clare," burst forth his aunt, "my doors should have been closed against you for a month. There, if you young people are to go it is time to start. Dancing to begin an evening at ten o'clock at night! In my time we used to go at seven; but its the custom now to turn night into day."

"When George the Third dined at one o'clock upon boiled mutton and turnips!" put in the graceless captain, who certainly held his aunt in no great reverence.

He turned to Hazel as he spoke, to hand her down-stairs. Thus she was conducted to her carriage a second time that night by a stranger. Mrs. Melborne got down by herself, as she best could, and her temper was not improved by the process.

"Good-night," she said to the captain.

"I shall not say good-night; you will find me there almost as soon as you."

"You told me you were not coming. Some bachelors' party in the way."

"Yes, but I have changed my mind. Farewell for the present, Miss Barrington."

"What an object you will look with nothing on your neck but a school-girl's chain!" began Mrs. Melborne, returning to the grievance as the carriage drove on.

"Oh! Mrs. Melborne, what does it signify? I can only think of my broken cross. I am sure it must be an evil omen."

"An evil what?"

"An evil omen. Mamma gave me that cross when she was dying; she told me to let it be to me as a talisman; always to keep it safely, and when I was in any distress, or in need of counsel, to look at it and strive to recall what her advice would be, and to act accordingly. And now it is broken—broken!"

A glaring electric light flashed into the carriage, right into the face of Hazel.

"I declare," uttered Mrs. Melborne, "you are crying again! I tell you what it is, Hazel, I am not going to chaperon red eyes to the ball; so, if you can't put a stop to this, I shall order the carriage home and go on alone."

Hazel meekly dried her eyes, sighing deeply as she did so.

"I can have the pieces joined, I dare say; but it will never be the same cross to me again."

"What have you done with the pieces?" irascibly asked Mrs. Melborne.

"I folded them in a thin paper Mrs. St. Clare gave me, and put it inside my dress. Here it is," touching the body. "I haven't a pocket."

Mrs. Melborne gave vent to a groan. She never had been a girl herself—she had been a woman at ten, and she complimented Hazel upon being little better than an imbecile.

"Put it inside your dress," she uttered, in a torrent of scorn. "And you eighteen years of age! You are a baby idiot," was the inward comment of Mrs. Melborne.

In a few minutes Hazel forgot her grievance. The brilliant ball-room was to her as an enchanting scene of dreamland, for her heart was in its spring-tide of early freshness, and the satiety of experience had not come. How could she remember trouble, even the broken cross, as she bent to the homage offered her, and drank in the honeyed words poured forth into her ear.

"Halloo!" cried a Yale student (with a large fortune in prospective) who was screwing himself against the wall, not to be in the way of the waltzers, "I thought you had given up coming to these places?"

"So I had," replied the dandy. "But, I am on the lookout, so am forced into them again. I think a ball-room the greatest bore in life."

"On the lookout for what?"

"For a wife. My governor has stopped supplies, and has vowed by his beard not to advance another dollar or pay a debt till I reform. As a preliminary step toward it, he insists upon a wife, and I am trying to choose one, for I am deeper in debt than you imagine."

"Take the new beauty, then."

"Who is she?"

"Miss Hazel Barrington."

"Much obliged for the suggestion," replied the dude.

"But one likes a respectable father-in-law, and Mr. William Barrington is going to smash. He and I are too much in the same line, and might clash in the long run."

"One can't have everything; the girl's beauty is beyond the common. I saw that rake St. Clare make up to her."

He fancies he can carry all before him where ladies are concerned."

"So he often does," was his quiet reply.

"I hate the fellow! He thinks so much of himself, and is as heartless as an owl. What was that hushed-up business about Miss Maynard? Who's to know? St. Clare slipped out of the escapade like an eel, and the woman protested that she was more sinned against than sinning. Three fourths of the world believed her."

"And she went abroad and died, and St. Clare— Here he comes, and Miss Barrington with him."

They were approaching at that moment, Captain St. Clare and Hazel Barrington. He was expressing his regret at the accident of the cross for the tenth time that night.

"I feel that it can never be atoned for," whispered he; "that the heartfelt homage of my whole life would not be sufficient compensation."

He spoke in a tone of thrilling gentleness, gratifying to the ear but dangerous to the heart.

Hazel glanced up and caught his eyes gazing upon her with the deepest tenderness—a language hers had never yet encountered. A vivid blush again rose to her cheek, her eyelids fell, and her timid words died away in silence.

"Take care—take care, young lady," murmured the student under his breath, as they passed him; "that man is as false as he is fair."

"I think he is a rascal," remarked the student's companion.

"I know he is; I know a thing or two about him. He would ruin her heart for the renown of the exploit, because she's a beauty, and then fling it away broken. He has none to give in return for the gift."

"Just as much as my new race-horse has," concluded the young man.

"She is very beautiful."

CHAPTER III.

BARRINGTON was a very pretty town, and of some importance. It had derived its name from the immense Barrington estate, which is situated in the eastern part of the town. Passing out of the town toward the east, you come

upon several detached houses, in the vicinity of which stood the Church of St. Paul, which was more aristocratic in the matter of its congregation than the other churches of West Barrington. For about a mile these houses were scattered, the church being situated at their commencement, close to the busy part of the place; and about a mile further on you came upon the beautiful estate which was called the Barrington estate. Between the houses mentioned and the Barrington estate the mile of road was solitary, being much overshadowed with trees.

One house stood there, and that was three quarters of a mile before you came to the Barrington estate; it was on the left side. A flat lawn extended before it, and it stood some little distance back from the road, and close to the palings, which divided it from the road, was a grove of elm-trees some yards in depth. The lawn was divided by a narrow middle gravel path, to which you gained access from the road by a narrow gate, and which led to the rustic portico of the house. You entered a large flagged hall, with a reception-room on either hand, and this place was called The Elms, and was the property of Judge Osborne.

The room to the left as you went in was the general sitting-room; the other was very much boxed up in lavender and brown holland, to be opened on state occasions. Mrs. Osborne had borne the judge three children, two daughters and one son. Mary was the elder of the girls, and had married young. Lulu was now nineteen, and Thomas, the oldest—but we will come to him hereafter.

In the sitting-room, on a chilly evening early in May, a few days subsequent to that which had witnessed the visit of Mr. Clifton to Mr. Barrington, sat Mrs. Osborne, a pale delicate woman, buried in shawls and cushions; but the day had been warm. At the window sat a pretty girl, very fair, with blue eyes, light hair, a bright complexion, and small aquiline features. She was listlessly turning over the leaves of a book.

“Lulu, I am sure it must be dinner time.”

“The time seems to move slowly with you, mamma. It is scarcely a quarter of an hour since I told you it was ten minutes past six.”

“I am so tired,” murmured the poor invalid. “Do go and look at the clock again, Lulu.”

Lulu Osborne rose with a gesture of impatience not sup-

pressed, opened the door, and glanced at the large clock in the hall.

"It wants a quarter to seven, mamma. I wish you would put your watch on of a day; four times you have asked me to look at the clock in the last hour."

It might occur to the reader that a lady in her own house might surely order dinner although the customary hour had not struck. Not so Mrs. Osborne. Since her husband had first brought her home to that house, twenty-four years ago, she had never dared to express a will in it; scarcely, on her own responsibility, to give an order. Judge Osborne was stern, imperative, obstinate, and self-conceited; she, timid, gentle, and submissive. She had loved him with all her heart, and her life had been one long yielding of her will to his; in fact, she had no will—his was all in all. Far was she from feeling the servitude a yoke—some natures do not; and, to do Mr. Osborne justice, his powerful will in bearing down all before it was a fault of kindness; he never meant to be unkind to his wife. Of his three children Lulu alone had inherited his will.

"Lulu," began Mrs. Osborne again, when she thought another quarter of an hour had elapsed.

"Well, mamma?"

"Ring and tell them to be ready, so that when seven strikes there may be no delay."

"Goodness, mamma! you know they do always have it ready, and there's no such hurry, for papa may not be home."

But she rose and rang the bell with a petulant motion, and when the servant answered it, told him to have dinner served at once.

"If you knew, dear, how faint and feeble I feel you would have more patience with me."

Lulu closed her book with a listless air, and turned to the window. She seemed tired, not with fatigue, but with what the French express by the word *ennui*.

"Here comes papa!" she presently said.

"Oh, I am so glad!" cried poor Mrs. Osborne. "Perhaps he will not mind having dinner at once."

The judge came in—a middle-sized man with pompous features, a pompous walk. In his aquiline nose, compressed lips, and pointed chin might be traced a resem-

blance to his daughter, though he could never have been half so good-looking as pretty Lulu.

"Thomas," spoke Mrs. Osborne, from between her shawls, the instant he opened the door.

"Well?"

"Would you please let me have dinner now? Would you very much mind having it a little earlier this evening? I am so weak, and I do want my soup."

"Oh, it's near seven; you won't have to wait long."

With this exceedingly gracious answer to an invalid's request Mr. Osborne quitted the room again and banged the door. He had not spoken unkindly or roughly—simply with indifference. But ere Mrs. Osborne's meek sigh of disappointment was over the door was reopened and his head thrust in again.

"I don't mind if I do have dinner now. It will be a fine moonlight night, and I am going with Harvy as far as Woodbridge's, so order dinner, Lulu."

The dinner was over and the judge had departed for Mr. Woodbridge's, Lawyer Harvy calling for him at the gate. Mr. Woodbridge owned a great deal of farming land, and was also Mr. Barrington's agent; he lived some distance beyond the Barrington estate.

"I am so cold, Lulu," shivered Mrs. Osborne, as she watched the judge down the gravel path. "I wonder if your papa would say it was foolish of me if I told them to light a fire?"

"Have it lighted if you like," responded Lulu, ringing the bell. "Papa won't know anything about it one way or the other, for he won't be home till very late. James, mamma is cold and would like a fire lighted."

"Plenty of sticks, James, that it may burn up quickly," said Mrs. Osborne, in a pleading voice, as if the wood were James's and not hers.

Mrs. Osborne got her fire, and she drew her chair in front and put her feet on the fender to catch its warmth; Lulu, listless still, went into the hall, took a woollen shawl from a stand there, and threw it over her shoulders and went out. She walked down the straight, formal path, and stood at the iron gate, looking over it into the public road—not very public in that spot and at that hour, but as lonely as one could wish.

The night was calm and pleasant, though somewhat

chilly for the beginning of May, and the moon was getting high in the sky.

"When will he come?" she murmured, as she leaned her head upon the gate. "Oh, what would life be without him? How miserable these few days have been! I wonder what took him there? I wonder what is detaining him! Fannie said he was only gone for a day."

The faint echo of footsteps in the distance stole upon her ear, and Lulu drew a little back and hid herself under the shelter of the trees, not choosing to be seen by any stray passer-by. But as they drew near a sudden change came over her, her eyes lighted up, her cheeks were dyed with crimson, and her veins tingled with excess of rapture—for she knew those footsteps, and loved them only too well.

Cautiously peeping over the gate again, she looked down the road. A tall form, whose very height and strength bore a grace of which its owner was unconscious, was advancing rapidly toward her from the direction of the railroad station. Again she shrunk away; true love is ever timid, and whatever may have been Lulu Osborne's other qualities, her love at least was true and deep. But, instead of the gate opening with the firm, quick motion peculiar to the hand which guided it, the footsteps seemed to pass and not to have turned at all toward it.

Lulu's heart sunk, and she stole to the gate again and looked out with a yearning look.

Yes, sure enough, he was striding on, not thinking of her, not coming to her, and she, in the disappointment and impulse of the moment, called to him:

"Harold!"

Mr. Clifton—it was no other—turned on his heel, and approached the gate.

"Is it you, Lulu? Watching for the moon? How are you?"

"How are you?" she returned, holding the gate open for him to enter, as he shook hands, and striving to calm down her agitation. "When did you return?"

"Only now, by the eight o'clock train, which was behind time, having delayed so long at the stations. They little thought they had me on it. I have not been home yet."

"No? What will Fannie say?"

"I went into the office for five minutes. But I have a

little business with Mr. Woodbridge, and am going there at once. Thank you, I can not come in now; I intend to do so on my return."

"Papa has gone up to Mr. Woodbridge's."

"Mr. Osborne! Has he?"

"He and Lawyer Harvy," continued Lulu. "They have gone to have a game of billiards. And if you wait there with papa it will be too late to come in, for he is sure not to come home before eleven or twelve o'clock."

Mr. Clifton bent his head in deliberation.

"Then I think it is of little use my going on," said he, "for my business with Mr. Woodbridge is private. I must defer it until to-morrow."

He took the gate out of her hand and closed it, and placed her hand within his arm to walk with her to the house. It was done in a matter-of-fact sort of way; nothing of romance or sentiment hallowed it, but Lulu Osborne felt that she was in Eden.

"And how have you all been, Lulu, these few days?"

"Oh, very well. What made you start off so suddenly? You never said you were going or came to say good-bye."

"You have just expressed it, Lulu—suddenly. A matter of business suddenly arose, and I suddenly went upon it."

"Fannie said you were only gone for a day."

"Did she? When in New York I found so many things to do. Is your mother well?"

"Just the same; I think mamma's ailments are fancies, half of them; if she would rouse herself she would be better. What is in that parcel?"

"You are not to inquire, Miss Lulu. It does not concern you. It only concerns Mrs. Osborne."

"Is it something you have brought for mamma, Harold?"

"Of course. A countryman's visit to New York entails buying presents for his friends; at least, it used to be so in the old-fashioned days."

"When people made their wills before starting, and were a fortnight doing the journey in a wagon," laughed Lulu. "Grandpapa used to tell us tales of that when we were children. But is it really something for mamma?"

"Don't I tell you so? I have brought something for you."

"Oh! what is it?" she uttered, her color rising, and wondering whether he was in jest or earnest.

"There's an impatient young lady! What is it? Wait a moment and you shall see what it is."

He put the parcel or roll he was carrying upon a garden chair, and proceeded to search his pockets. Every pocket was visited apparently in vain.

"Lulu, I think it is gone. I must have lost it somewhere."

Her heart beat as she stood there silently looking up at him in the moonlight. Was it lost? What had it been?

But, upon a second search, he came upon something in his coat pocket.

"Here it is, I believe. What brought it there?"

He opened a small box, and taking out a long gold chain, threw it around her neck.

Her cheeks' crimson went and came; her heart beat more rapidly. She could not speak a word of thanks; and Mr. Clifton took up the roll and walked on into the presence of Mrs. Osborne.

Lulu followed in a few minutes. Her mother was standing up, watching with pleased expectation the movements of Mr. Clifton.

"Now don't laugh at me," quoth he, untying the string of the parcel. "It is not a roll of velvet for a dress or a new cloak. But it is—an air-cushion."

It was what poor Mrs. Osborne, so worn with sitting and lying, had often longed for. She had heard such a luxury was to be bought in New York but never remembered to have seen one. She took it almost with a greedy hand, casting a grateful look at Mr. Clifton.

"How am I to thank you for it?" she murmured through her tears.

"If you thank me at all I will never bring you anything again!" cried he, gayly. "I have been telling Lulu that a visit to the city entails bringing gifts for friends. Do you see how fine she looks with her chain?"

Lulu hastily took off the chain for her mother to look at.

"What a beauty!" said Mrs. Osborne. "Harold, you are too good, too generous! This must have cost a great deal; this is beyond a trifle."

"Nonsense!" laughed Mr. Clifton. "I'll tell you both how I happened to buy it. I went into a jeweler's about

my watch, which has taken to lose lately in a most uncere-
monious fashion, and there I saw a whole display of chains
hanging up; some ponderous enough for a sheriff, some
elegant and light enough for Lulu. I dislike to see a thick
chain on a lady's neck. They put me in mind of the chain
Lulu lost the day we went picnicking in Maplewood Grove;
she said it was my fault, because I insisted upon her going
to the picnic."

"But I was only joking when I said so. Of course it
would have happened had you not been with me; the links
were always snapping."

"Well, these chains in the jeweler's put me in mind of
Lulu's misfortune, and I chose one. Then the clerk
brought forth some locketts, and enlarged upon their con-
venience for holding deceased relatives' hair. I told him
he might do me up one, so here it is. I thought it might
hold that piece of hair you prize, Lulu," he concluded,
dropping his voice.

"What piece?" asked Mrs. Osborne.

Mr. Clifton glanced around the room, as if fearful the
very walls might hear his whisper.

"Thomas's. Lulu showed it to me one day when she
was looking over her desk, and said it was a curl taken off
in that illness."

Mrs. Osborne sunk back in her chair, and hid her face
in her hands, shivering visibly. The words evidently awoke
some poignant source of deep sorrow.

"Oh, my boy! my boy!" she wailed—"my boy! my un-
happy boy! Mr. Osborne wonders at my ill health, Harold;
Lulu ridicules it; but there lies the source of all my misery,
mental and bodily. Oh, Thomas! Thomas!"

There was a distressing pause, for the topic admitted of
neither hope nor consolation.

"Put your chain on again, Lulu," Mr. Clifton said,
after awhile, "and I wish you health to wear it out.
Health and reformation, young lady."

Lulu smiled, and glanced at him with her pretty blue
eyes so full of love.

"Well, I shall wish you good-evening, and go to Fannie;
for if she knows I am back all this while I shall be lect-
ured."

He shook hands with them both. Lulu, however, ac-

accompanied him to the front door and stepped outside with him.

"You will catch cold, Lulu. You have left your wrap in-doors."

"Oh, no, I shall not. How very soon you are leaving! You have scarcely stayed ten minutes."

"But you forget. I have not been home."

"You were on your road to Mr. Woodbridge's, and would not have been home for an hour or two in that case," said Lulu, in a tone that savored of resentment.

"That was different; that was upon business. But, Lulu, I think your mother looks unusually ill."

"You know how she suffers a little thing to upset her, and last night she had what she calls one of her dreams," answered Lulu. "She says that it was a warning that something bad is going to happen, and she has been in the most unhappy, feverish state possible all day. Papa has been quite angry over her being so weak and nervous, declaring that she ought to rouse herself out of her 'nerves.' Of course, we dare not tell him about the dream."

"It related to—the—"

Mr. Clifton stopped, and Lulu glanced round with a shudder and drew closer to him as she whispered:

"Yes, to the murder. You know mamma has always declared that Hood had something to do with it; she says her dreams would have convinced her of it, if nothing else did, and she dreamed she saw him with—with—you know."

"Truesdell?" whispered Mr. Clifton.

"With Truesdell," assented Lulu, with a shiver. "He was standing over him, as he lay on the floor, just as he did lay on it. And that wretched Kate was standing at the end of the kitchen looking on."

"But Mrs. Osborne ought not to suffer dreams to disturb her peace by day," remonstrated Mr. Clifton. "It is not to be wondered that she dreams of the murder, because she is always dwelling upon it; but she should strive and throw the feeling off her with the night."

"You know what mamma is. Of course she ought to do so, but she does not. Papa wonders what makes her get so ill and trembling of a morning; and mamma has to make all sorts of evasions and excuses, for not a hint, as you are aware, must be breathed about the murder."

Mr. Clifton gravely nodded.

“Mamma does so harp upon—. And I know this dream arose from nothing in the world but because she saw him pass the gate yesterday. Not that she thinks it was he who did it—unfortunately there is no room for that—but she will persist that he had a hand in it some way, and he haunts her dreams.”

Mr. Clifton walked on in silence; indeed, there was no reply that he could make. A cloud had fallen upon the house of Mr. Osborne, and it was an unhappy subject. Lulu continued:

“But for mamma to have taken it in her head that some evil is going to happen because she has had this dream, and to make herself miserable over it, is so absurd that I have felt quite cross with her all day. Such nonsense, you know, Harold, to believe that dreams give signs of what is going to happen—so far behind these enlightened days!”

“Your mamma’s trouble is great, Lulu, and she is not strong.”

“I think all our troubles have been great since that dark evening,” responded Lulu.

They had reached the gate, and Mr. Clifton was about to pass out of it, when Lulu laid her hand on his arm to detain him, and said, in a timid voice:

“Harold!”

“What is it?”

“I have not said a word of thanks to you for this,” she said, touching the chain and locket; “my tongue seemed tied; do not deem me ungrateful.”

“You foolish girl! it is not worth them. There, now I am paid. Good-night, Lulu.”

He bent down and kissed her cheek, swung through the gate laughing, and strode away.

“Don’t say I never gave you anything.” He turned his head round to say good-night.

All her veins were tingling, all her pulses beating; her head was throbbing with its sense of bliss. He had never kissed her, that she could remember, since she was a child. And when she returned in-doors her spirits were so extravagantly high that Mrs. Osborne wondered.

Lulu sat down at the window; she was living the last half hour over again. “Don’t say I never gave you anything,” she murmured. Did he allude to the chain or the kiss?

“Oh! Harold, why don’t you say that you love me?”

Mr. Clifton had been all his life on intimate terms with the Osborne family. His father's first wife—for the late Lawyer Clifton had been twice married—had been a cousin of Judge Osborne, and this had caused them to be much together. Harold, the child of the second Mrs. Clifton, had alternately teased and petted Mary and Lulu Osborne boy fashion. Sometimes he quarreled with the pretty little girls, sometimes he caressed them as he would have done had they been his sisters; and he made no scruple of declaring publicly to the girls that Mary was his favorite. A gentle, yielding girl she was—like her mother; whereas Lulu displayed her own will, and it sometimes clashed with young Harold's.

The clock struck ten. Mrs. Osborne took her customary brandy and water, a small tumbler three parts full. Without it she believed she could never get to sleep; it deadened unhappy thoughts, she said. Lulu, after making it, had turned again to the window; but she did not resume her seat. She stood right in front of it, her forehead bent forward against its pane. The lamp, casting a bright light, was behind her, so that her figure might be distinctly observable from the lawn, had any one been there to look upon it.

She stood there in the midst of dreamland, giving way to all its enchanting and delusive fascinations. She saw herself, in anticipation, the wife of Mr. Clifton, the envied, thrice-envied of all Barrington; for, as he was the dearest on earth to her heart, so was he the greatest match in the neighborhood around. Not a mother but what coveted him for her child, not a daughter but would have said "Yes, and thank you," to an offer from the attractive Harold Clifton.

"I never was sure quite of it till to-night," murmured Lulu, caressing the locket, and holding it to her cheek. "I always thought he meant something, or he might mean nothing; but to give me this—to kiss me—oh, Harold!"

A pause. Lulu's eyes fixed upon the moonlight.

"If he would but say he loved me; if he would but save the suspense of my aching heart! But it must come—I know it will—and if that cantankerous toad of a Fannie—"

Lulu Osborne stopped. What was that at the far end of the lawn, just in advance of the shade of the thick trees? Their leaves were not causing the movement, for it was a

still night; it had been there some minutes; it was evidently a human form.

What was it? Surely it was making signs to her, or else it looked as though it was. That was certainly its arm moving, and now it advanced a pace nearer, and raised something which it wore on its head—a battered hat with a broad brim encircled with a wisp of straw.

Lulu Osborne's heart leaped, and her face became deathly white in the moonlight. Her first thought was to alarm the servants; her second to be still; for she remembered the fear and mystery that attached to the house. She went into the hall, shutting her mamma in the parlor, and stood in the shade of the portico, gazing still. But the figure evidently followed her movements with its sight, and the hat was again taken off, and waved violently.

Lulu Osborne turned sick with utter terror. She must fathom it; she must see who or what it was. For the servants she dared not call, and those movements were imperative, and must not be disregarded. But she possessed more innate courage than falls to the lot of some young ladies.

“Mamma,” she said, returning to the parlor and catching up her shawl, while striving to speak without emotion, “I will just walk down the path and see if papa is coming.”

Mrs. Osborne did not reply. She was musing upon other things in that quiescent, happy mood which a small portion of spirits will impart to one weak in body; and Lulu softly closed the door, and stole out again to the portico.

She stood a moment to rally her courage; and again the hat was waved impatiently. Lulu Osborne commenced her walk toward it in dread unutterable, an undefined sense of evil filling her sinking heart, mingling with which came, with a rush of terror, a fear of that other undefinable evil—the evil Mrs. Osborne had declared was foreboded by her dream.

CHAPTER IV.

COLD and still looked the old house in the moonbeams. Never was the moon brighter; it lighted the far-stretching garden, it shone upon the portico and upon the one who appeared in it. Stealing to the portico from the house

came Lulu Osborne, her eyes, strained in dread affright, on the grove of trees at the foot of the garden. What was it that had slipped out of that grove of trees and mysteriously beckoned to her as she stood at the window, turning her heart to sickness as she gazed? Was it a human being? One to bring more evil to the house where so much evil had already fallen? Was it a supernatural visitant, or was it but a delusion of her own eyesight? Not the latter, certainly, for the figure was now emerging again, motioning to her as before; and with a white face and shaking limbs Lulu clutched her shawl around her, and went down the path into the moonlight. The beckoning form retreated within the dark recess as she neared it, and Lulu halted.

“Who and what are you?” she asked, under her breath. “What do you want?”

“Lulu,” was the whispered answer, “don’t you recognize me?”

Too surely she did—the voice, at any rate—and a cry escaped her, telling more of sorrow than joy, though betraying both. She penetrated the trees, and burst into tears as one in the dress of a farm laborer caught her in his arms. In spite of his disguise she knew him for her brother.

“Oh, Thomas! where have you come from? What brings you here?”

“Did you know me, Lulu?” was the rejoinder.

“How was it likely—in this disguise? A thought crossed my mind that it might be some one from you, and even that made me sick with terror. How could you run such a risk as to come here?” she added, wringing her hands. “If you are discovered it is certain death; death—upon—you know! Upon the gallows. Should mamma see you it will kill her outright.”

“I can’t live on as I have been living,” he answered, gloomily. “I have been working in New York ever since.”

“In New York?” interrupted Lulu.

“In New York; and have never stirred out of it. But it was hard work for me, and now I have an opportunity of doing better, if I can get a little money. Perhaps my mother can let me have it; it is what I have come to ask for.”

“How are you working? What at?”

“In a stable.”

“A stable!” she uttered, in a deeply shocked tone.

“Did you expect it would be as a merchant, or a banker, or that I was a gentleman at large living on my fortune?” retorted Thomas Osborne, in a tone of chafed anguish painful to hear. “I get three dollars a week, and that has to find me everything. I sleep in the loft of the stable.”

“Poor Thomas, poor Thomas!” she wailed, caressing his hand and weeping over it. “Oh, what a miserable night’s work that was! Our only comfort is, Thomas, that you must have committed the deed in madness.”

“I did not commit it at all,” he replied.

“What!” she exclaimed.

“Lulu, I swear that I am innocent; I swear that I was not present when the man was murdered; I swear that, from my own positive knowledge, my eyesight, I know no more who did it than you. The guessing at it is enough for me, and my guess is as sure and true a one as that the moon is in the heavens.”

Lulu shivered as she drew close to him. It was a shivering subject.

“You surely do not mean to throw the guilt on Hood?”

“Hood!” slightly returned Thomas. “He had nothing to do with it. He was after other things that night, thief though he is!”

“Hood is no thief, Tom.”

“Is he not?” returned Tom, significantly.

“The truth as to what he is may come out some time. Not that I wish it to come out; the man has done no harm to me, and he may go on stealing with impunity till doomsday, for all I care. He and Clarke—”

“Tom,” interrupted his sister, in a hushed voice, “mamma entertains one fixed idea which she can not put from her. She is certain that Hood had something to do with the murder.”

“Then she is wrong. Why should she think so?”

“How the conviction arose at first I can not tell you; I do not think she knows herself. But you remember how weak and fanciful she is, and since that dreadful night she is always having what she calls dreams—meaning that she dreams of the murder. In all these dreams Hood is prominent, and she says she feels an absolute certainty that he was in some way or other mixed up in it.”

"Lulu, he was no more mixed up in it than you."

"And you say you were not?"

"I was not even at the cottage at the time. I swear it to you. The man who did the deed was Tilford."

"Tilford!" echoed Lulu, lifting her head. "Who is Tilford?"

"I don't know; I wish I did. I wish I could unearth him. He was a friend of Kate."

Lulu threw back her head with a haughty gesture.

"Tom!"

"What?"

"You forget yourself when you mention that name to me."

"Well," returned Tom, "it was not to discuss these things that I put myself into jeopardy, and to assert my innocence can do no good; it can not set aside the coroner's verdict of 'willful murder against Thomas Osborne, junior.' Is my father as bitter against me as ever?"

"Quite. He never mentions your name, or suffers it to be mentioned. He gave orders to the servants that it was never to be spoken in the house again. Papa took an oath that— Did you hear of it?"

"What oath? He takes many."

"This was a solemn one, Tom. After the verdict he took an oath that if he could find you he would deliver you up to justice, and that he would do it though you might not turn up for ten years to come. You know his disposition, Tom, and therefore may be sure he will keep it. Indeed, it is most dangerous for you to be here."

"I know that he never treated me as he ought," said Tom, bitterly. "If my health was delicate, causing my poor mother to indulge me, ought that to have been a reason for his ridiculing me on every possible occasion, public and private? Had my home been made happier I should not have sought the society I did elsewhere. Lulu, I must be allowed an interview with my mother."

Lulu reflected before she spoke.

"I do not see how it can be managed."

"Why can't she come out to me as you have done? Is she up or in bed?"

"It is impossible to think of it to-night," returned Lulu, in an alarmed tone. "Papa may be in at any moment; he is spending the evening at Woodbridge's."

"It is hard to have been separated from her eighteen months and to go back without seeing her," returned Tom. "And about the money? It is five hundred dollars that I want."

"You must be here again to-morrow night, Tom. The money, no doubt, can be yours, but I am not so sure about your seeing mamma. I am terrified for your safety. But, if it is as you say, that you are innocent," she added, after a pause, "could it not be proved?"

"Who is to prove it? The evidence is strong against me; and Tilford, did I mention him, would be as a myth to other people; nobody knew anything about him."

"Is he a myth?" said Lulu, in a low tone.

"Are you and I myths?" retorted Tom. "Lu, even you doubt me?"

"Tom," she suddenly exclaimed, "why not tell the whole circumstance to Harold Clifton? If any one can help you or take measures to establish your innocence, he can. And you know that he is true as steel."

"There is no other man living who should be trusted with the secret that I am here, except Harold Clifton. Where is it supposed that I am, Lulu?"

"Some think that you are dead; some that you are in Canada. The very uncertainty has nearly killed mamma."

"I dodged my way to New York, and there I have been."

"Working in a stable?"

"I could do no better. I was not brought up to do anything, and I did understand horses. Besides, a man that the detectives are looking for could be more safe in obscurity, considering that he was a gentleman, than—"

Lulu turned suddenly, and placed her hand upon her brother's mouth.

"Be silent, for your life!" she whispered. "Here's papa."

Voices were heard approaching the gate—those of Judge Osborne and Lawyer Harvy. The latter walked on, the former came in. The brother and sister cowered together, scarcely daring to breathe; you might have heard Lulu's heart beating. Mr. Osborne closed the gate and walked on up the path.

"I must go, Tom," said Lulu, hastily; "I dare not

stay another minute. Be here again to-morrow night, and meanwhile I will see what can be done."

She was speeding away, but Tom held her back.

"You did not seem to believe my assertion of innocence, Lulu. We are here alone in the still night. As truly as you and I must die some time, I told you the truth. It was Tilford murdered Truesdell, and I had nothing whatever to do with it."

Lulu flew from the trees, but Mr. Osborne was already in, locking and barring the door.

"Let me in, papa!" she called out.

The judge opened the door again, and, thrusting forth his head, gazed at Lulu with amazed eyes.

"Halloo! what brings you out at this time of night, young lady?"

"I went down to the gate to look for you, and had strolled over to the side-path. Did you not see me?"

Lulu was truthful by nature and habit, but in such a cause how could she avoid dissimulation?

"You ought to have been in bed an hour ago," angrily responded Mr. Osborne.

CHAPTER V.

MR. CLIFTON was seated in his own private room in his office the morning after his return from the city. His confidential clerk and manager stood near him. It was Mr. Faber, a meek-looking man with a bald head. Perhaps he deemed the post of head manager in the office of Clifton & Moore, with its substantial salary, sufficient for his ambition. He was a single man, and occupied handsome apartments near by.

Mr. Faber had a desk in the first small office as you entered the hall from the street, and there he frequently sat. He was sitting there in state this morning, keeping a sharp lookout around him, when the door timidly opened, and the pretty face of Lulu Osborne appeared at it, rosy with blushes.

"Can I see Mr. Clifton?"

Mr. Faber rose from his seat and made her his best bow. She asked him to step into the hall, and he closed the door. Perhaps he felt surprised, for it was not the custom for ladies, young and single, to come there after Mr. Clifton.

"Presently, Miss Lulu. He is engaged just now. The judges are with him."

"The judges! What ever shall I do? Papa must not see me. I would not have him see me here for the world."

An ominous sound of talking; the judges were evidently coming out of Mr. Clifton's private office. Mr. Faber took hold of Lulu, whisked her through the clerks' room, not daring to take her the other way lest she should encounter them, and shut her in one of the other offices.

"What the plague brought papa here at such a time?" thought Lulu, whose face was crimson.

A few minutes, and Mr. Faber opened the door again.

"They are gone now and the coast is clear, Miss Lulu."

"I don't know what opinion you must form of me, Mr. Faber," she whispered; "but I will tell you in confidence that I am here on some private business for mamma, who was not well enough to come herself. It is a little private matter that she does not wish papa to know of."

"Child," answered the manager, "a lawyer receives visits from many people, and it is not the place of those about him to 'think.'"

He opened the door as he spoke, ushered her into the presence of Mr. Clifton, and left her. The latter rose in astonishment.

"You must regard me as a client, and pardon my intrusion," said Lulu, with a forced laugh, to hide her agitation. "I am here on the part of mamma, and nearly met papa here, which terrified me out of my senses. Mr. Faber shut me in one of the rooms."

Mr. Clifton motioned to Lulu to seat herself, then resumed his own seat beside his table. Lulu could not help noticing how different his manners were in the office from his evening manners when he was "off duty." Here he was the staid, calm man of business.

"I have a strange thing to tell you," she began, in a whisper; "but—is it possible that any one can hear us?" She stopped, with a look of dread. "It would be—it might be—death!"

"It is quite impossible," calmly replied Mr. Clifton. "The doors are double doors."

Nevertheless, she left her chair and stood close to Mr. Clifton, resting her hand upon the table. He rose also.

"Thomas is here."

"Thomas!" repeated Mr. Clifton. "At Barrington?"

"He appeared at the house last night in disguise, and made signs to me from the grove of trees. You may imagine my alarm. He has been in New York all this while, half starving. And, oh! Harold, he says he is innocent."

Mr. Clifton made no reply to this. He probably had no faith in the assertion.

"Sit down, Lulu," he said, drawing her chair closer.

Lulu sat down again but her manner was hurried and nervous.

"Be at ease," said Mr. Clifton; "this room is sacred from the intrusion of strangers. What of Thomas?"

"He says he was not in the cottage at the time the murder was committed, that the person who really did it was a man of the name of Tilford."

"What Tilford?" asked Mr. Clifton, suppressing all signs of incredulity.

"I don't know; a friend of Kate, he said. Harold, he swore to it in the most solemn manner, and I believe, as truly as I am now repeating it to you, that he was speaking the truth. I want you to see Tom, if possible; he is coming to the same place to-night. If he can tell his own tale to you perhaps you may find out a way by which his innocence may be made manifest. You are so clever, you can do most anything."

Mr. Clifton smiled.

"Was this the purport of Tom's visit—to say this?"

"Oh, no! He thinks it is of no use to say it, for nobody would believe him against the evidence. He came to ask for five hundred dollars; he says he has an opportunity of doing better if he can have that sum. Mamma has sent me to you; she has not the money by her now, and she dare not ask papa for it, as it is for Tom. She bade me say that if you will kindly oblige her with the money to-day she will arrange with you about the repayment."

"Do you want it now?" asked Mr. Clifton. "If so, I must send to the bank. Mr. Faber never keeps much money in the house when I'm away."

"Not until evening. Can you manage to see Tom?"

"It is hazardous," mused Mr. Clifton—"for him, I mean. Still, if he is to be in the grove to-night, I may as well be there also. What disguise is he in?"

"A farm laborer's—the best he could adopt about here

—with large black whiskers. He is stopping about three miles off, he said, in some obscure hiding-place. And now,” continued Lulu, “I want you to advise me. Had I better inform mamma that Tom is here or not?”

Mr. Clifton did not understand, and said so.

“I declare I am bewildered!” she exclaimed. “I should have premised that I have not yet told mamma it is Tom himself who is here, but that he has sent a messenger to beg for this money. Would it be advisable to acquaint her?”

“Why should you not? I think you ought to do so.”

“Then I will. I was fearing the hazards, for she is sure to insist upon seeing him. Tom also wishes for an interview.”

“It is only natural. Mrs. Osborne must be thankful to hear, so far, that he is safe.”

“I never saw anything like it,” returned Lulu; “the change is akin to magic; she says it has put life into her anew. And now for the last thing. How can we secure papa’s absence from home to-night? It must be accomplished in some way. You know his temper. Were I or mamma to suggest to him to go and see a friend, or go to the club, he would immediately stop at home. Can you devise any plan? You see, I appeal to you in all my troubles,” she added.

It may be a question if Mr. Clifton heard the last remark. He had dropped his eyelids in thought.

“Have you told me all?” he asked, presently, lifting them.

“I think so.”

“Then I will consider it over, and—”

“I shall not like to come here again,” interrupted Lulu. “It—it might excite suspicion. Some one might see me, too, and mention it to papa.”

“Well, be walking up the street at three o’clock this afternoon, and I will meet you.”

He escorted Lulu to the door and bade her good-morning. When the door had closed she had taken but one step from it, when something large loomed down upon her like a ship in full sail.

She must have been the tallest lady in the world—out of a caravan—a fine woman in her day, but angular and bony

now. Still, in spite of the angles and bones, there was majesty in the appearance of Miss Clifton.

"Why, what on earth," began she, "have you been with Harold for? I was passing an hour ago and saw you go into his office."

Lulu Osborne, wishing Miss Clifton anywhere but where she could see her, stammered out the excuse she had given Mr. Faber.

"Your mamma sent you on business? I never heard of such a thing. Twice have I been to see Harold, and twice did Mr. Faber answer that he was engaged and must not be interrupted. I shall make old Faber explain his meaning for observing a mystery over it to me."

"There is no mystery," answered Lulu, feeling quite sick lest Miss Clifton should proclaim there was before the clerks or her father. "Mamma wanted Mr. Clifton's opinion on a little private business, and not feeling well enough to come herself, she sent me."

Miss Clifton did not believe a word.

"What business?" asked she, unceremoniously.

"It is nothing that could interest you. A trifling matter relating to a little money. It's nothing, indeed."

"Then if it is nothing, why were you closeted so long with Harold?"

"He was asking the particulars," replied Lulu, recovering her equanimity.

Miss Clifton sniffed, as she invariably did when dissenting from problems. She was sure there was some mystery astir. She turned and walked down the street with Lulu, but she was none the more likely to get anything out of her.

Mr. Clifton returned to his room, deliberated a few moments, and then rang his bell. A clerk answered it.

"Go back to Hilton's, and if the judges are there ask Mr. Osborne and the other judges if they will please step over and see me again."

The young man did as he was bid, and came back with the noted judges at his heels. They obeyed the summons with alacrity, for they believed they had got themselves into a judicial scrape and that Mr. Clifton alone could get them out of it.

"I will not ask you to sit down, for it is barely a moment I shall detain you. The more I think of putting this

man in prison for life, the less I like it; and I have been considering that you had better all come and take dinner with me this evening, and when smoking our after-dinner cigars we will have time to discuss what must be done."

They all accepted the invitation and left one after the other. When Mr. Osborne was passing out Mr. Clifton laid his hand on his arm.

"You will surely be at my house, Mr. Osborne?" he whispered. "We could not do without you. All heads"—with a slight inclination to those going out—"are not gifted with the clear good sense of yours."

"Sure and certain," responded the gratified judge; "fire and water wouldn't keep me away."

Soon after Mr. Clifton was left alone another clerk entered.

"Miss Clifton is asking to see you, sir; and Colonel Hood's come again."

"Send in Miss Clifton first," was the answer. "What is it, Fannie?"

"Ah! you may well ask what. Saying this morning you could not dine as usual, and then marching off and never fixing the hour. How can I give my orders?"

"I thought business would have called me out, but I am not going now. We will dine a little earlier, though, Fannie—say a quarter before six. I have invited—"

"What's up, Harold?" interrupted Fannie.

"Up? Nothing that I know of. I am very busy, Fannie, and Colonel Hood is waiting. I will talk to you at lunch time. I have invited a party for dinner."

"A party!" echoed Fannie.

"Four or five of the judges."

"They sha'n't come!" screamed Miss Clifton. "Do you think I'll be poisoned with cigar smoke after dinner?"

"You need not sit in the room."

"Nor they neither. Clean lace curtains are just put up throughout the house, and I'll have no horrid smoke to blacken them."

"And now, Fannie, I really must beg you to leave me."

"When I have come to the bottom of this affair with Lulu Osborne," resolutely returned Fannie, dropping the point of the contest as to the judges. "I asked Lulu what she came here for. Business for her mamma touching

money matters, was her reply. I tell you, Harold, I'll hear what it is. I should like to know what you and Lulu do with a secret between you!"

Mr. Clifton knew her and her resolute expression well, and he took his course to tell her the truth. She was, to borrow the words Lulu had used to her brother with regard to him, true as steel. Confide to Miss Clifton a secret, and she was trustworthy and impervious as she could be; but let her once suspect that there was a secret which was being kept from her, and she would set to work like a ferret, and never stop until it was unearthed.

Mr. Clifton bent forward and spoke in a whisper.

"I will tell you, if you wish to know, Fannie; but it is not a pleasant thing to her. Tom Osborne has returned."

Miss Clifton looked perfectly aghast.

"Tom Osborne? Is he mad?"

"It is not a very sane proceeding. He wants money from his mother, and Mrs. Osborne sent Lulu to ask me to manage it for her. No wonder poor Lulu was flurried and nervous, for there's danger on all sides."

"Is he at their house?"

"How could he be there and his father in it? He is hiding two or three miles off, disguised as a laborer, and will be at the grove of trees to-night to receive the money. I have invited the judges to get Mr. Osborne safe away from his own house. If he saw Tom he would undoubtedly give him up to justice; and, putting graver considerations aside, that would be pleasant neither for you nor me. To have a connection of ours hung for a willful murder would be an ugly blot on the Clifton escutcheon, Fannie."

Miss Clifton sat in silence, revolving the news, a contraction on her ample brow.

"And now you know all, Fannie, and I do beg you to leave me, for I am overwhelmed with work to-day."

CHAPTER VI.

THE judges did not fail to keep their appointments. They arrived at Miss Clifton's, one following closely upon the heels of the other. The reader may dissent from the expression "Miss Clifton's," but it is the correct one; for the house was hers, not her brother's. Though it remained

his home, as it had been in his father's time, the house was among the property bequeathed to Miss Clifton.

Miss Clifton chose to be present, in spite of smoke, and she was soon as deep in the discussion as the judges were. It was said in the town she was as good a lawyer as her father had been. She undoubtedly possessed sound judgment in legal matters, and quick penetration. At eight o'clock a servant entered the room and addressed Mr. Clifton:

"Mr. Faber is asking to see you."

Mr. Clifton rose and came back with an open note in his hand.

"I am sorry to find that I must leave you for half an hour; some important business has arisen; but I will be back as soon as I can."

"Who has sent for you?" immediately demanded Miss Clifton.

He gave her a quiet look, which she interpreted into a warning not to question.

"Mr. Faber is here, and will join you to talk the affair over," he said to his guests. "He knows the law better than I do; but I will not be long."

He quitted the house and walked with rapid step toward Mr. Osborne's. The moon was bright, as on the previous evening.

After he left the town behind him, and was passing the scattered houses already mentioned, he cast an involuntary glance at the woods which rose behind them on the left.

There was one small house or cottage just within the woods, and in that cottage had occurred the murder for which Thomas Osborne's life was in jeopardy. It was no longer occupied, for nobody would rent it or live in it.

Lulu was at the window, looking out, and she came herself to open the door for Mr. Clifton.

"Mamma is in the most excited state," she whispered to him as he entered. "I knew how it would be."

"Has he come yet?"

"I have no doubt of it; but he has made no signal."

Mrs. Osborne, feverish and agitated, with a burning spot on her delicate cheeks, stood by the chair, not occupying it. Mr. Clifton placed a pocket-book in her hands.

"I have brought it chiefly in notes," he said; "they will be easier for him to carry than gold."

Mrs. Osborne answered only by a look of gratitude, and clasped Mr. Clifton's hand in both hers.

"Harold, I must see my boy. How can it be managed? Must I go into the garden to him, or may he come in here?"

"I think he might come in. You know how very bad the night air is for you. Are the servants much astir this evening?"

"Things seemed to have turned out quite kindly," said Lulu. "It happens that they are all away."

"Then they are safe," observed Mr. Clifton, "and Tom may come in."

"I will go and see if he has come," said Lulu.

"Stay where you are, Lulu; I will go myself," said Mr. Clifton. "Have the door open when you see us coming up the path."

Lulu gave a faint cry, and, trembling, clutched the arm of Mr. Clifton.

"There he is! See—standing out from the trees, just opposite this window!"

Mr. Clifton turned to Mrs. Osborne.

"I shall not bring him in immediately, for if I am to have an interview with him it must be got over first, that I may go back home to the judges and keep Mr. Osborne all safe."

He proceeded on his way, gained the trees, and plunged into them. Leaning against one stood Thomas Osborne. Apart from his disguise and false and fierce black whiskers, he was a blue-eyed, fair, pleasant-looking young man, slight, and of middle height, and quite as yielding and gentle as his mother. In her this mild yieldingness of disposition was rather a graceful quality; in Tom it was regarded as a contemptible misfortune. In his boyhood he had been nicknamed "Leafy Tom," and when a stranger inquired why, the answer was that, as a leaf was swayed by the wind, so he was swayed by every one around him, never possessing a will of his own. In short, Thomas Osborne, though of an amiable and loving nature, was not overburdened with what the world calls brains.

"Is my mother coming out to me?" asked Tom, after a few interchanged sentences with Mr. Clifton.

"No; you are to go in-doors. Your father is away, and the servants are out and will not be home till late."

"Let us go in then. I am anxious to get away. Am I to have the money?"

"Yes, yes. But your sister says you wish to disclose to me the true history of that lamentable night. You had better speak while we are here."

"It was Lulu herself wanted you to hear it. I think it of little moment. If the whole place heard the truth from me, it would do no good, for I should get no relief—not even from you."

"Try me, Tom, in as few words as possible."

"Well, there was a row at home about my going so much to Truesdell's. The governor and my mother thought I went after Kate; perhaps I did, and perhaps I didn't. Truesdell had asked me to lend him my gun, and that evening, when I went to see Ka—when I went to see some one— Never mind—"

"Tom," interrupted Mr. Clifton, "there's an old saying, and it is sound advice: 'Tell the whole truth to your lawyer and doctor.' If I am to judge whether anything can be attempted for you, you must tell all to me; otherwise I would rather hear nothing. It shall be a sacred trust."

"Then, if I must, I must," returned the yielding Tom. "I did love the girl; I would have waited until I could have made her my wife, though it had been for years and years. I could not do it in the face of my father's opposition."

"Your wife?" rejoined Mr. Clifton, with some emphasis.

Tom looked surprised.

"Why, you don't suppose I meant anything else. I wouldn't have been such a scamp!"

"Well, go on, Tom. Did she return your love?"

"I can't be certain. Sometimes I thought she did, sometimes not; she used to play and dilly-dally, and she liked too much to be with him. I would not think her capricious—telling me I must not come this evening, and I must not come the other; but I found out they were evenings when she was expecting him. We were never there together."

"You forget that you have not indicated 'him' by any name."

Tom bent forward till his black whiskers brushed Mr. Clifton's shoulder.

"It was that cursed Tilford."

Mr. Clifton remembered the name Lulu mentioned.

"Who was Tilford? I never heard of him."

"Neither did anybody else, I expect, in Barrington. He took precious good care of that. He lives some miles away, and used to come over in secret."

"Courting Kate?"

"Yes, he did come courting her," returned Tom, in a savage tone. "Distance was no barrier. He would come galloping over at dusk, tie his horse to a tree in the woods, and pass an hour or two with Kate. In the house, when her father was not at home, roaming about the woods with her when he was."

"Come to the point, Tom—to the evening."

"Truesdell's gun was out of order, and he requested the loan of mine. I had made an appointment with Kate to be at her house that evening, and I went down after dinner, carrying the gun with me. My father called after me to know where I was going. I said out with young Woodbridge, not caring to meet his opposition; and the lie told against me at the inquest. When I reached Truesdell's, going the back way along the fields and through the wood-path, as I generally did go, Kate came out, all reserve, as she could be at times, and said she was unable to see me then; that I must go back home. We had a few words about it, and as we were speaking Clarke passed and saw me with the gun in my hand. But it ended in my giving way. She could do just what she liked with me, for I loved the very ground she trod on. I gave her the gun, telling her it was loaded, and she took it in-doors, shutting me out. I did not go away; I had suspicions that she had Tilford there, though she denied it to me; and I hid myself in some trees near the house. Again Clarke came in view and saw me there, and called out to know why I was hiding. I shied further off, and did not answer him. What were my private movements to him? And that also told against me at the inquest. Not long afterward—twenty minutes, perhaps—I heard a shot, which seemed to be in the direction of the cottage. Somebody having a late pop at the partridges, thought I; for the sun was then setting, and at the moment I saw Hood emerge from the trees

and run in the direction of the cottage. That was the shot that killed Truesdell."

There was a pause. Mr. Clifton looked keenly at Tom in the moonlight.

"Very soon, almost in the same minute, as it seemed, some one came panting and tearing along the path leading from the cottage. It was Tilford. His appearance startled me. I had never seen a man show more utter terror. His face was livid, his eyes seemed starting, and his lips were drawn back from his teeth. Had I been a strong man I should surely have attacked him. I was mad with jealousy, for I then saw that Kate had sent me away that she might entertain him."

"I thought you said this Tilford never came but at dusk?" observed Mr. Clifton.

"I never knew him to do so until that evening. All I can say is, he was there then. He flew along swiftly, and I afterward heard the sound of his horse's hoofs galloping away. I wondered what was up that he should look so scared and scud away as though the deuce was after him. I wondered if he had quarreled with Kate. I ran to the house, leaped up the two steps, and—Harold, I fell over the prostrate body of Truesdell! He was lying just within, on the kitchen floor, dead. Blood was round about him, and my gun, just discharged, was thrown near. He had been shot in the side."

Tom stopped for breath. Mr. Clifton did not speak.

"I called to Kate. No one answered. No one was in the lower hall and room, and it seemed that no one was in the upper. A sort of panic came over me—a fear. You know they always said at home I was a coward; I could not have remained another minute with that dead man had it been to save any own life. I caught up the gun and was making off, when—"

"Why did you catch up your gun?" interrupted Mr. Clifton.

"Some vague notion flashed on my brain that my gun ought not to be found near the murdered body of Truesdell. I was flying from the door, when Clarke emerged from the woods in full view; and what possessed me I can't tell, but I did the worst thing I could do—flung the gun in-doors again and got away."

"Nothing told against you so much as that," observed

Mr. Clifton. "Clarke deposed that he had seen you leave the cottage, gun in hand, apparently in great commotion; that the moment you saw him you hesitated, as from fear, flung back the gun, and escaped."

Tom stamped his foot.

"Ay! and all owing to my cursed cowardice. But let me go on: I came upon Hood; he was standing in the half circle where the trees have been cut. Now, I knew that Hood, if he had gone straight in the direction of the cottage, must have met Tilford leaving it.

"Did you encounter that hound?" I asked him.

"What hound?" returned Hood.

"That fine fellow—that Tilford, who comes after Kate," I answered; for I did not mind mentioning her name in my passion.

"I don't know any Tilford," returned Hood, "and I didn't know anybody was after Kate but yourself."

"Did you hear a shot?" I went on.

"Yes, I did," he replied; "I suppose it was Clarke, for he's about this evening."

"And I saw you," I continued, "just at the moment the shot was fired, turn round the corner in the direction of Truesdell's."

"So I did," he said; "but only to strike into the woods a little further up. What's your drift?"

"Did you not encounter Tilford running from the cottage?" I persisted.

"I have encountered no one," he said, "and I don't believe anybody's about but ourselves and Clarke."

"I quitted him and came off," concluded Tom. "He evidently had not seen Tilford, and knew nothing."

"And you decamped the same night. Tom, it was a fatal step!"

"I thought I'd wait quietly and see how things turned out; but you don't know all. Three or four hours later I went to the cottage again, and I managed to see Kate for a minute. I never shall forget it. Before I could utter a syllable she flew out at me, accusing me of being the murderer of her father, and she fell into hysterics out there on the grass. If she can think me guilty, the world will think me guilty, was my argument; and that night I went right off, to stop in hiding for a day or two, till I saw my way clear. It never came near; the verdict floored me. And

Kate—but I won't curse her—fanned the flame against me by denying that any one had been there that night."

Mr. Clifton remained silent, rapidly running over in his mind the chief points of Tom's communication.

"Four of you, as I understand it, were in the vicinity of the cottage that night, and from one or the other the shot proceeded. You were at a distance, you say, Tom; Hood also could not have been."

"It was not Hood who did it; it was an impossibility. I saw him, as I tell you, the same moment that the gun was fired."

"But now, where was Clarke?"

"He was within my view at the time. It was Tilford did the deed, beyond all doubt, and the verdict ought to have been willful murder against him. Harold, I see you don't believe my story!"

"What you say has startled me, and I must take time to consider whether I believe it or not," said Mr. Clifton, in his straightforward manner. "The most singular thing is, if you witnessed this Tilford's running from the cottage in the manner you describe, that you did not come forward and denounce him."

"What would my word have availed that it was Tilford, when there was nobody to corroborate it?"

"Another thing strikes me as curious," said Mr. Clifton. "If this man Tilford was in the habit of coming to Barrington evening after evening, how was it that he never was observed? This is the first time I have heard any stranger's name mentioned in connection with the affair, or with Kate."

"It was evident to me at the time that he was striving to do so in secret. I told Kate so, and that it augured no good for her. And as surely as that we—I, Tilford, Kate, and Truesdell—must one day meet together, I have told you the truth!"

The words were solemn, their tone earnest. Mr. Clifton remained silent, his thoughts full.

"To what end, else, should I say this?" went on Tom. "It can do me no service; all the assertions I could put forth would not go a jot toward clearing me."

"No, they would not," assented Mr. Clifton. "If ever you are cleared, it must be by proofs. But I will keep my

thoughts on the matter, and should anything arise—What sort of a man was this Tilford?”

“In age he might be twenty-three or four, tall and slender, and an out-and-out aristocrat.”

“And his connections? Where did he live?”

“I never knew. Kate, in her boasting way, would say he had to come from Hillsdale, a ten-mile ride.”

“From Hillsdale?” quickly interrupted Mr. Clifton.

“Could it be one of the Tilfords of Hillsdale?”

“None of the Tilfords that I know of. He was a totally different sort of man, with his perfumed hands, and his rings, and his dainty gloves. That he was an aristocrat I believe, but of bad taste and style, displaying a profusion of jewelry.”

A half smile flitted over Mr. Clifton’s face.

“Was it real, Tom?”

“It was. He would wear diamond shirt-studs, diamond rings, diamond pins—all of the first water. My impression was that he put them on to dazzle Kate.”

“By your description it could not have been one of the Tilfords of Hillsdale—wealthy farmers and fathers of young families—short, stout, and heavy as Dutchmen, staid and most respectable. Very unlikely men are they to run into an expedition of that sort.”

“What expedition?” questioned Tom. “The murder?”

“The riding after Kate. Tom, where is Kate?”

Tom had lifted his eyes in surprise.

“How should I know? I was just going to ask you.”

Mr. Clifton paused. He thought Tom’s answer rather an evasive one.

“She disappeared immediately after the funeral, and it was thought—in short, Tom, the neighborhood gave her credit for having gone after you.”

“No! did they? What a pack of idiots. I have never seen or heard of her, Harold, since that unfortunate night. If she went after anybody it was after Tilford.”

“Was the man good-looking?”

“I suppose the world would call him so. Kate thought such an Adonis had never been coined out of fable. He had black hair and whiskers, dark eyes and handsome features. But his vain dandyism spoiled him.”

Mr. Clifton could ascertain no more particulars, and it

was time Tom went in-doors. They proceeded up the path, and entered the door. Mr. Clifton's part was over; he left the poor exile to his short interview with his hysterical and tearful mother, Tom nearly as hysterical as she, and made the best of his way home again, pondering over what he had heard. He found the judges just about finishing up their discussion and cigars. Mr. Clifton invited them to have another bottle of wine and more cigars, so it was about twelve o'clock when they wished Mr. Clifton good-night, and departed. But Mr. Faber, in obedience to a note from him, remained. Fannie had gone to bed with a headache from the smoke.

"Sit down again, Faber; I want to ask you a question. You are intimate with the Tilfords of Hillsdale. Do they happen to have any relative, a nephew or cousin, perhaps—a dandy young fellow?"

"I went over last Sunday to spend the day with Henry."

"Young Henry? He must be forty, I suppose."

"About that. But you and I estimate ages differently, Mr. Clifton. They have no nephew."

"Mr. Faber," said Mr. Clifton, "something has arisen which, in my mind, casts a doubt upon Thomas Osborne's guilt. I question whether he had anything to do with the murder."

Mr. Faber opened his eyes.

"But his flight, Mr. Clifton, and his stopping away?"

"Suspicious circumstances, I grant. Still, I have good cause to doubt. At the time it happened some dandy fellow used to come courting Kate Truesdell in secret; a tall slender man, as he is described to me, bearing the name of Tilford and living at Hillsdale. Could it have been one of the Tilford family?"

"Mr. Clifton!" remonstrated the old clerk; "as if those two respected farmers with their wives and babies would come sneaking after that fly-away Kate!"

"No reflection on them," returned Mr. Clifton. "This was a young man, a head taller than either. I thought it might be a relative."

"I have repeatedly heard the men say that they are alone in the world; that they are the two last of the name. Depend upon it it was nobody connected with them;" and, wishing Mr. Clifton good-night, he departed.

The servant came in to remove the glasses and obnoxious

cigar ashes. Presently he asked the servant if Sally had gone to bed.

"No, sir, she is just going."

"Send her here when you have taken those things away."

Sally came in. She was of middle height, and never would see thirty-five again; her forehead was broad, her gray eyes were deeply set, and her face was pale. Altogether she was plain, but sensible-looking. She was a half-sister of Kate Truesdell.

"Shut the door, Sally."

Sally did as she was bid, came forward, and stood by the table.

"Have you ever heard from your sister?" began Mr. Clifton, somewhat abruptly.

"No, sir," was the reply. "I think it would be a wonder if I did hear."

"Why so?"

"If she could go off after Tom Osborne, who had sent her father into his grave, she would be more likely to hide herself and her doings than to proclaim them to me, sir."

"Who was that other—that fine-looking gentleman who came after her?"

The color mantled in Sally's cheeks, and she dropped her voice.

"Sir! did you hear of him?"

"Not at that time. Since. He came from Hillsdale, did he not?"

"I believe so, sir. Kate never would say much about him. We did not agree upon the point. I said a person like him would do no good, and Kate flew out when I spoke against him. I only saw him once; I had gone home early, and there sat he and Kate. His white hands were all glittering with . . . and his shirt was finished off with shining stones where the buttons ought to be."

"Have you seen him since?"

"Never, but once; and I don't think I should know him if I did see him. He got up, sir, as soon as I went into the parlor, shook hands with Kate, and left. He was nearly as tall as you are, sir—a fine-looking man. Those soldiers always do carry themselves well."

"How do you know he was a soldier?" quickly rejoined Mr. Clifton.

“Kate told me so. ‘The captain,’ she used to call him; but she said he was not a captain yet awhile—next grade to it—a—a—”

“Lieutenant?” suggested Mr. Clifton.

“Yes, sir; that was it—Lieutenant Tilford.”

“Sally,” said Mr. Clifton, “has it never struck you that Kate is more likely to have followed Lieutenant Tilford than Tom Osborne?”

“No, sir,” answered Sally. “I have felt certain always that she is with Tom Osborne, and nothing can turn me from the belief. All Barrington is convinced of it.”

Mr. Clifton did not attempt to “turn her from the belief.” He dismissed her, and sat on still, revolving the case in all its bearings.

Thomas Osborne’s short interview with his mother had soon terminated. It had lasted but a quarter of an hour, both dreading interruption from the returning servants; and with the five hundred dollars in his pocket and desolation at heart the ill-fated young man once more quitted his childhood’s home.

Mrs. Osborne and Lulu watched him steal down the path in the tell-tale moonlight and gain the road, both feeling that those farewell kisses they had pressed upon his lips would not be renewed for years, and perhaps not forever.

CHAPTER VII.

THE church clocks at Barrington struck nine one lovely morning in July, and then the bells chimed out, giving token that it was Sunday.

The Barrington estate had changed owners, and now it was the property of Mr. Clifton. He had bought it as it stood, furniture and all; but the transfer had been conducted with secrecy, and was suspected by none save those engaged in the negotiations. Whether Mr. William Barrington thought it might prevent any one getting on the scent, or whether he wished to take farewell of a place he had formerly been fond of, certain it is that he craved a week or two’s visit to it. Mr. Clifton most readily and graciously acquiesced, and Mr. Barrington and his daughter and retinue of servants had arrived the previous day.

All Barrington was in ecstasies; the great aristocrat, Mr. Barrington, and his lovely daughter, of the Barrington

estate, were to be at church. The toilets prepared to meet his admiring eyes were prodigious, and pretty Lulu Osborne was not the only young lady who had thereby to encounter the paternal storm.

Miss Clifton was ready for church at the usual time, plainly but well dressed. As she and Harold were leaving their house they saw something looming up the street flashing and gleaming in the sun. A pink parasol covered with white lace came first, a pink hat and feather behind it, then a gray brocaded dress and tan gloves.

"The vain little idiot!" ejaculated Miss Clifton. But Lulu sailed up the street toward them, unconscious of the apostrophe.

"The judge might well call out, 'You are finer than a sunbeam!'"

"Not half so fine as many another in the church will be to-day," responded Lulu, as she lifted her shy blue eyes and blushing face to answer the greeting of Mr. Clifton.

Lulu sat in the Clifton pew that day, for she thought the further she was away from her father the better; there was no knowing but he might take a sly, revengeful cut at the feather in the middle of the service, and so spoil its beauty. Scarcely were they seated when some stranger came quietly up the aisle—a gentleman who limped as he walked, with a furrowed brow and gray hair, and with him a young lady. Lulu looked round with eagerness, but looked away again. They could not be the expected strangers; the young lady's dress was too plain.

"Who in the world can they be?" whispered Lulu to Miss Clifton. "That old stupid usher has shown them into the Barrington pew; he is always putting people in the wrong place."

"It is Mr. Barrington and his daughter."

The color flushed into Lulu's face, and she stared at Miss Clifton. "She's plainer than anybody in the church. I should have known her from her likeness to her poor mother—just the same eyes and sweet expression."

Ay, those brown eyes, so full of sweetness and melancholy—few who had seen them once could mistake or forget them. Lulu, forgetting where she was, looked at them much that day.

"She is very lovely," thought Lulu, "and her dress is certainly that of a lady. I wish I had not had this stream-

ing pink feather. What fine jackdaws she must deem us country people!"

Mr. Barrington's carriage was waiting at the conclusion of the service. He handed his daughter in, and was putting his gouty foot upon the step to follow her, when he observed Mr. Clifton. He turned and held out his hand. A man who could purchase the Barrington estate was worthy of being received as an equal, though he was but a country lawyer.

Mr. Clifton shook hands with Mr. Barrington, approached the carriage, and raised his hat to Hazel Barrington. She bent forward with her pleasant smile, and put her hand into his.

"I have many things to say to you," said Mr. Barrington. "I wish you would go home with us if you have nothing better to do."

"Fannie, I shall not be home to dinner; I am going with Mr. Barrington. Good-day, Lulu."

Mr. Clifton stepped into the carriage, and it drove away. The sun shone still, but the day's brightness had gone out for Lulu Osborne.

"How does he know the Barringtons so well? How does he know the young lady?" she said, in her astonishment.

"Harold knows something about most people," replied Miss Clifton. "He saw Mr. Barrington frequently, when he was in the city in the spring, and Miss Barrington once or twice. What a lovely face hers is!"

Lulu made no reply. She returned home with Miss Clifton, but her manner was as absent as her heart, and that had run away to the Barrington estate.

CHAPTER VIII.

BEFORE Mr. Barrington had completed the fortnight of his proposed stay the gout came on seriously. It was impossible for him to move away from the Barrington estate. Mr. Clifton assured him he was only too pleased that he should remain as long as might be convenient, and Mr. Barrington expressed his acknowledgments. He hoped soon to be re-established on his legs.

But he was not. The gout came and the gout went—not positively laying him up in bed, but rendering him un-

able to leave his rooms, and this continued till October, when he grew much worse.

The country families had been neighborly, calling on the invalid; but his chief and constant visitor had been Mr. Clifton. Mr. Barrington had grown to like him in no common degree, and was disappointed if Mr. Clifton spent an evening away from him; so that he became, as it were, quite domesticated with Mr. Barrington and Hazel.

"I am not quite equal to general society," he observed to his daughter, "and it is considerate and kind of Mr. Clifton to come here and cheer my loneliness."

"Extremely kind," said Hazel. "I like him very much, papa."

"I don't know anybody that I like half as well," was the rejoinder.

Mr. Clifton went up as usual and found Mr. Barrington alone. Hazel had gone riding. It was a very long country road Hazel had selected for her ride; she was enjoying it with all the fervor of spirited youth, and when she was returning she saw in the distance one of the servants galloping at full speed to meet her. When she came within speaking distance the servant urged her to make haste, as her father was taken seriously ill, and no time was to be lost.

The housekeeper, Mrs. Hamilton, waited at the hall door to receive her, and Mr. Clifton helped her to alight. She scarcely dared to inquire, "Is he better? May I go to his room?"

An officious servant came running to meet her, saying her father was "screaming shockingly, but the doctor thinks he will live till morning."

With a sharp cry she seized the arm of Mr. Clifton—seized it for support in her shock of agony. Mr. Clifton thrust the servant away and led Hazel up to her father's room, and allowed her to enter. Yes, her father was better—better in so far that he was quiet and senseless. Mr. Clifton drew the housekeeper aside.

"Is there any hope?"

"Not the slightest, sir; he is dying."

Mr. Barrington knew no one. Pain was gone for the present, and he lay on his bed, calm; but his face, which had death in it all too plainly, startled Hazel. She did not scream or cry; she was perfectly quiet, save that she had a fit of shivering.

"Will he soon be better?" she whispered to the doctor who stood there.

The doctor coughed. "Well—he—he—we must hope it."

"But why does his face look like that? It is pale—gray; I never saw anybody else look so."

"He has been in great pain, and pain leaves its traces on the countenance."

Mr. Clifton, who had come, and was standing by the doctor, touched his arm to draw him from the room. He noticed the look on Mr. Barrington's face, and did not like it; he wished to question the doctor. Hazel saw that Mr. Clifton was about to quit the room, and beckoned to him.

"Do not leave the house, Mr. Clifton. When he wakes up it may cheer him to see you here; he liked you very much."

"I will not leave it, Miss Barrington; I did not think of doing so."

In time—it seemed an age—the medical men arrived from Hillsdale—three of them; the groom had thought he could not summon too many. It was a sad scene they entered upon: the ghastly patient growing restless again, now battling with his departing spirit, and the beautiful young girl watching at his side.

They stooped to look at the patient, and felt his pulse and touched his heart, and exchanged a few murmured words with Dr. Gilbert. Hazel had stood back to give them place, but her anxious eyes followed their every movement. They did not seem to notice her, and she stepped forward.

"Can you do anything for him? Will he recover?"

They all turned at the words and looked at her. One spoke. It was an evasive answer.

"Tell me the truth!" she implored, with feverish impatience; "you must not trifle with me. Do you not know me? I am his only child, and I am here alone."

The first thing was to get her away from the room, for the great change was approaching, and the parting struggle between the body and the spirit might be one of warfare—no sight for her. But, in answer to their suggestion that she should go, she only leaned her head upon the pillow by her father, and moaned in despair.

"She must be got out of the room," said one of the physicians, almost angrily. "Madame," turning suddenly

upon the housekeeper, "are there no relatives in the house—no one who can exert influence over the young lady?"

"She has scarcely any relatives," replied the housekeeper—"no near ones; and we happen to be, just now, quite alone."

But Mr. Clifton, seeing the urgency of the case—for the patient with every minute grew more excited—approached and whispered to her:

"You are as anxious as we can be for your father's recovery?"

"As anxious!" she uttered, reproachfully.

"You know what I would imply. Of course our anxiety can be nothing to yours."

"As nothing—as nothing. I think my heart will break."

"Then—forgive me—you should not oppose the wishes of these medical men. They wish to be alone with him, and time is being lost."

She rose up, placed her hands on her brow, as if to collect the sense of the words, and then she addressed the doctors:

"Is it really necessary that I should leave the room—necessary for him?"

"It is necessary—absolutely essential."

She broke into a passion of tears and sobs as Mr. Clifton led her to another apartment.

"He is my dear father; I have but him in the wide world!" she exclaimed.

"I know—I know; I feel for you all that you are feeling. Twenty times this night I have wished—forgive me the thought—that you were my sister, so that I might express my sympathy more freely and comfort you."

"Tell me the truth, then: why am I kept away? If you can show me a sufficient cause I will be reasonable and obey; but do not say again I should be disturbing him, for it is not true."

"He is too ill for you to see him—his symptoms are too painful. In fact it would not be proper; and were you to go in, in defiance of advice, you would regret it all your after-life."

"Is he dying?"

Mr. Clifton hesitated. Ought he to dissemble with her as the doctors had done? A strong feeling was upon him that he ought not,

"I trust to you not to deceive me."

"I fear he is—I believe he is."

She rose up—she grasped his arm in sudden fear that flashed over her.

"You are deceiving me, and he is dead!"

"I am not deceiving you, Miss Barrington. He is not dead, but—it may be very near."

She laid her head down upon the soft pillow. "Going forever from me—going forever! Oh, Mr. Clifton, let me see him for a minute—just one farewell! Will you not try for me?"

He knew how hopeless it was; but he turned to leave the room.

"I will go and see. But you will remain here quietly—you will not come?"

She bowed her head in acquiescence, and he closed the door. Had she indeed been his sister he would probably have turned the key upon her. He entered the death-chamber. But not many seconds did he remain in it.

"It is over," he whispered to Mrs. Hamilton, whom he met in the hall, "and the doctor is asking for you."

"You are soon back," cried Hazel, lifting her head. "May I go?"

He sat down and took her hand.

"I wish I could comfort you," he exclaimed, in a tone of deep emotion.

Her face turned to ghastly whiteness—as white as another's not far away.

"Tell me the worst," she breathed.

"I have nothing to tell but the worst."

She turned to hide her face and its misery from him, and a low wail of anguish broke from her, telling its own tale of despair.

The gray dawn of morning was breaking over the world, the advent of another bustling day in life's history; but the spirit of William Barrington, of the Barrington estate, had soared away from it forever.

CHAPTER IX.

EVENTS between the death of Mr. Barrington and his interment occurred quickly. He died on Friday morning at daylight. The news spread rapidly, and was known in

New York before the day was over, the consequence of which was that by the following day, by some unforeseen incident, Hazel Barrington knew that she was utterly penniless, and living on the bounty of Mr. Clifton.

Since the previous morning she seemed to have grown old. Her ideas were changed; the bent of her thoughts had been violently turned from their course. Instead of being a young lady of high position and wealth, she appeared to herself more in the light of an unfortunate pauper, an interloper in the house she was inhabiting.

On the following morning, Sunday, Mr. Clifton proceeded again to the Barrington estate and found, to his surprise, that there was no arrival of any of the few friends who had been notified of Mr. Barrington's death. Hazel sat in the breakfast-room alone, the meal on the table untouched, and she shivering—as it seemed—on a low ottoman before the fire. She looked so ill that Mr. Clifton could not forbear remarking upon it.

“I have not slept, and I am very cold,” she answered. “I did not close my eyes all night. It is strange that my friends have not come.”

She had scarcely spoken when the servant entered with his silver salver full of letters, most of them bearing condolence with Hazel. She singled out one and hastened to open it.

“It is my aunt's handwriting,” she remarked to Mr. Clifton.

“MOUNT PLEASANT, *Saturday*.

“MY DEAR HAZEL,—I am dreadfully grieved and shocked at the news conveyed in Mr. Clifton's letter to my husband, for he has gone cruising in his yacht, and I opened it. Goodness knows where he may be, but he said he should be home for Sunday, and he is pretty punctual in keeping his word. I expect him. Be assured he will not lose a moment in hastening to Barrington.

“I can not express what I feel for you, and am too *bouleversee* to write more. Try and keep up your spirits, and believe me, dear Hazel, with sincere sympathy and regret,
Faithfully yours,

“DORA MELBORNE.”

Hazel handed the note to Mr. Clifton.

“It is very unfortunate,” she sighed.

Mr. Clifton glanced over it as quickly as Mrs. Melborne's illegible writing allowed him. Perhaps the thought struck him, had Mrs. Melborne been worth a rush she would have come herself, knowing Hazel's lonely situation. Hazel leaned her head upon her hand. All the difficulties and embarrassments of her position came crowding on her mind. No orders had been given in preparation for the funeral, and she felt she had no right to give any.

"Mr. Clifton, how long has this house been yours?" she asked.

"It was in June that the purchase was completed. Did your father never tell you he sold it to me?"

"No, never. All these things are yours?" glancing around the room.

"The furniture was sold with the house. Not such things as these," he added, his eyes falling on the silver on the breakfast-table; "not the plate and linen."

"Does my father owe you any money?" she breathed, in a timid tone.

"Not any," he replied. "Your father was never indebted to me in his life."

"Yet you purchased the Barrington estate."

"As any one else might have done," he answered, discerning the drift of her thoughts. "I was in search of an eligible estate to invest money in, and the Barrington estate suited me."

"I feel my position, Mr. Clifton," she resumed, the rebellious tears forcing themselves to her eyes, "to be thus intruding upon you for shelter. And I can not help myself."

"You can help grieving me," he gently answered, "which you do much when you talk of obligations. The obligation is on my side, Miss Barrington; and when I express a hope that you will continue at the Barrington estate while it can be of service, however prolonged that may be, I assure you I say it in all sincerity."

"You are truly kind," she faltered; "and for a few days, until I can think—until— Oh! Mr. Clifton, are papa's affairs really so bad as they say?" She broke off, her perplexities recurring to her with vehement force. "Is there nothing left?"

Now, Mr. Clifton might have given the evasive assurance that there would be plenty left, just to tranquilize

her. But to have used deceit with her would have pricked against every feeling of his nature, and he saw how implicitly she relied upon his truth.

"I fear things are not very bright," he answered. "That is, so far as we can see at present. But there may have been some settlement effected for you that you do not know of. Stevenson & Taylor—"

"No," she interrupted; "I never heard of a settlement, and I am sure there is none. I see the worst plainly. I have no home—no home, and no money! This house is yours; the city house and the Barrington seat down at Ocean Spray go to Mr. Melborne (who is papa's cousin), and I have nothing!"

"But surely Mr. Melborne will be delighted to welcome you to your old home. The houses pass to him. It almost seems as though you had a greater right in them than he or Mrs. Melborne."

"My home with them?" she retorted, as if the words had stung her. "What are you saying, Mr. Clifton?"

"I beg your pardon, Miss Barrington. I should not have presumed to touch upon these points myself, but—"

"Nay, I think I ought to beg yours," she interrupted, more calmly. "I am only grateful for the interest you take in them—the kindness you have shown. But I could not make my home with Mrs. Melborne."

Mr. Clifton rose. He could do no good by remaining, and did not think it well to intrude longer, thus once more leaving the poor girl alone with her unhappy thoughts and her dead.

CHAPTER X.

A CLOSED carriage was discerned thundering up the road that Sunday afternoon. It contained Mr. Melborne. Mr. Clifton soon joined him, and almost at the same time Mr. Stevenson arrived from New York. Absence from the city at the period of Mr. Barrington's death had prevented Mr. Stevenson's earlier attendance. Business was entered upon immediately.

Mr. Melborne knew that Mr. Barrington had been an embarrassed man, but he had no conception of the extent of the evil; they had not been intimate, and rarely came in contact. As the various items of news were now detailed

to him—the wasteful expenditure, the disastrous ruin, the total absence of provision for Hazel—he stood dumfounded and aghast. He was a tall, stout man, his nature honorable, his manners cold, and his countenance severe.

“It is the most iniquitous piece of business I ever heard of!” he exclaimed to the two lawyers. “Of all the reckless fools, he must have been the worst!”

“Unpardonably improvident as regards his daughter,” was the assenting remark.

“Improvident! It must have been rank madness!” retorted Mr. Melborne. “No man in his senses could leave a child to the mercy of the world as he has left her. She has not a dollar, literally not a dollar in her possession. I questioned her as to what money there was in the house when her father died; she answered, only what has been given to the housekeeper for housekeeping purposes. Can you realize such a case to the mind?” continued Mr. Melborne, excitedly. “I will stake my veracity that such a one never occurred yet!”

“No money for her own personal wants!” exclaimed Mr. Clifton. “Not a cent in the world! And there are no funds, and will be none, that I can see, for her to draw upon.”

“Quite correct, Mr. Melborne,” nodded Mr. Stevenson.

“I understand the Barrington estate is yours,” said Mr. Melborne, turning sharply upon Mr. Clifton; “Hazel has just said so.”

“It is,” was the reply. “It became mine last June. I believe Mr. Barrington kept the fact a close secret.”

“He was obliged to keep it a secret,” interposed Mr. Stevenson, addressing Mr. Melborne, “for not a stiver of the purchase money could he have fingered had it got out. Except ourselves and Mr. Clifton’s agents, the fact was made known to none.”

“It is strange, sir, that you could not urge the claims of his daughter upon him!” rejoined Mr. Melborne to Mr. Stevenson, his tone one of harsh reproof. “You were in his confidence, you knew the state of his affairs; it was in your line of duty to do so.”

“Knowing the state of affairs, we knew how useless the urging of it would be,” returned Mr. Stevenson. “You have but a faint idea of the burdens Mr. Barrington had upon him. The interest alone upon his debts was fright-

ful, and the deuce's ownwork it was to get it. Not to speak of the kites he let loose—he would fly them, and nothing could stop him—and they had to be provided for.”

“Oh, I know!” replied Mr. Melborne, with a gesture of contempt. “Drawing one bill to cover another; that was his system.”

“Drawing!” echoed Mr. Stevenson. “It was a downright mania with him.”

“Urged to it by his necessities, I conclude,” put in Mr. Clifton.

“He had no business to have such necessities,” cried Mr. Melborne, wrathfully. “But let us proceed to business. What money is there lying at his banker's, Mr. Stevenson? Do you know?”

“None,” was the blank reply. “We overdrew the account ourselves, a fortnight ago, to meet one of his pressing liabilities. We hold a little.”

“I'm glad there's something. What's the amount?”

“Mr. Melborne,” answered Mr. Stevenson, shaking his head in a self-condoling manner, “I am sorry to tell you what we hold will not half satisfy our claims—actually paid out of our pockets.”

“Then, where on earth is the money to come from, sir—for the funeral, for the servants' wages, for everything, in fact?”

“There is none to come from anywhere,” was the reply of Mr. Stevenson.

Mr. Melborne strode the carpet more fiercely.

“Wicked improvidence! shameful profligacy! callous-hearted man! To live a rogue and die a beggar, leaving his daughter to the charity of strangers!”

“Her case presents the worst feature of the whole affair,” remarked Mr. Clifton. “What will she do for a home?”

“She must of course find it with me,” replied Mr. Melborne; “and, I should hope, a better one than this. With all these duns and debts at his elbow, Mr. Barrington's house could not have been a bower of roses.”

“I fancy she knew nothing of the state of affairs; had seen little, if anything, of the embarrassments,” returned Mr. Clifton.

“Mr. Clifton is right,” observed Mr. Stevenson, looking over his specacles. “Miss Barrington was safe at

Ocean Spray, and the purchase money from the Barrington estate—what Mr. Barrington could touch of it—was a stop-gap for many things, and made matters easy for the moment. However, his imprudence is at an end now.”

“No, it is not at an end now,” returned Mr. Melborne.

Three mourners only attended the funeral—Hazel, Mr. Melborne, and Mr. Clifton. The latter was no relation of the deceased, and but a very recent friend; but Mr. Melborne had invited him, probably not liking the parading, solus, of his trappings of woe. Some of the country aristocracy were pall-bearers, and many private carriages followed.

All was bustle on the following morning.

Mr. Melborne was to depart, and Hazel was to depart, but not together. In the course of the day the domestics would disperse. Mr. Melborne was speeding to New York, and the carriage that was to convey him to the railway station was already at the door when Mr. Clifton arrived.

“I was getting fidgety, fearing you would not be here, for I have barely five minutes to spare,” observed Mr. Melborne, as he shook hands. “You are sure you fully understand about the tombstone?”

“Perfectly,” replied Mr. Clifton. “How is Miss Barrington?”

“Very down-hearted, I fear, poor child! for she did not breakfast with me. The housekeeper privately told me she was in a convulsion of grief. A bad man—a bad man!” Mr. Melborne emphatically added, as he rose and rang the bell.

“Let Miss Barrington be informed that I am ready to depart, and that I await to see her. And while she is coming, Mr. Clifton,” he added, “allow me to express my obligations to you. How I should have got along in this worrying business without you, I can not divine. You have promised, mind, to pay me a visit, and I shall expect it speedily.”

“Promised conditionally—that I find myself in your neighborhood,” smiled Mr. Clifton. “Should—”

Hazel entered, dressed also, and ready; for she was to depart immediately after Mr. Melborne. Her crape veil was over her face, but she threw it back.

“My time is up, Hazel, and I must go. Is there anything you wish to say to me?”

She opened her lips to speak, but glanced at Mr. Clifton and hesitated. He was standing at the window, his back toward them.

"I suppose not," said Mr. Melborne, answering himself, for he was in a fever of hurry to be off, like many others are when starting on a journey. "You will have no trouble whatever, my dear; only mind you to get some refreshments in the middle of the day, for you won't be at Mount Pleasant before evening. Tell Mrs. Melborne that I had no time to write, but will do so from New York."

But Hazel stood before him in an attitude of uncertainty—of expectancy, it may be said—her color varying.

"What is it? You wish to say something?"

She certainly did wish to say something, but she did not know how. It was a moment of embarrassment to her, intensely painful; and the presence of Mr. Clifton did not tend to lessen it. The latter had no idea his absence was wished for.

"Bless me, Hazel! I declare, I forgot all about it!" cried Mr. Melborne, in a tone of vexation. "Not being accustomed to—this aspect of affairs is so new—"

He broke off his disjointed sentences, unbuttoned his coat, drew out his purse, and paused over its contents.

"Hazel, I have run myself very short, and have but little beyond what will take me to the city. You must make twenty dollars do for now, my dear. Once at Mount Pleasant—Oscar has the funds for your journey—Mrs. Melborne will supply you; but you must tell her, or she will not know."

He shot out of his purse two ten-dollar gold pieces on the table.

"Farewell, my dear; make yourself happy at Mount Pleasant. I shall be home soon."

Passing from the room with Mr. Clifton, he stood talking with that gentleman a minute, his foot on the step of the carriage, and the next minute was being whirled away. Mr. Clifton returned to the breakfast-room, where Hazel, an ashy whiteness having replaced the crimson on her cheeks, was picking up the gold.

"Will you do me a favor, Mr. Clifton?"

"Gladly. What can I do for you?"

She was about to answer, "Nothing—that he had done

enough," but at that moment their attention was attracted by a bustle outside, and they moved to the window.

It was the carriage coming round for Hazel—the late Mr. Barrington's splendid equipage—having been ordered by Mr. Melborne, who appeared to wish Hazel to leave the neighborhood in as much state as she had entered it.

"All is ready," she said, "and the time is come for me to go. Mr. Clifton, I am going to leave you a legacy. Will you do me the favor of accepting those pretty gold and silver fish that I bought a few weeks back?"

"But why do you not take them?"

"Take them to Mrs. Melborne's? No; I would rather leave them with you. Throw a few crumbs into the globe now and then."

Her face was wet with tears, and he knew that she was talking hurriedly to cover her emotion.

"Sit down a few minutes," he said.

"No, no; I had better go at once."

He took her hand to conduct her to the carriage. The servants were gathered in the hall, waiting for her. Some had grown gray in her father's service. She put out her hand; she strove to say a word of thanks and farewell, and she thought she would choke at the effort of keeping down the sobs. At length it was over; a kind look around, a yearning wave of the hand, and she passed on with Mr. Clifton.

It had been decided that one of the trustworthy men-servants should travel with Hazel and her maid. The coachman was waiting for the signal to start, but Mr. Clifton had the carriage door open again, and was bending in, holding her hand.

"I have not said a word of thanks to you for all your kindness; you have seen that I could not."

"I wish I could have done more; I wish I could have shielded you from the annoyances you have been obliged to endure," he answered. "Should we never meet again—"

"Oh! but we shall meet again," she interrupted. "You promised Mr. Melborne—"

"True, we may so meet casually—once in a way; but our ordinary paths in life lie far apart. God forever bless you, Miss Barrington!"

The horses started, and the carriage sped on. She drew down the blinds and leaned back in an agony of tears—

tears for the house she was leaving, for the father she had lost. Her last thought had been of gratitude to Mr. Clifton; but she had more cause to be grateful to him than she yet knew of. Emotion soon spent itself, and as her eyes cleared she saw a bit of crumpled paper lying on her lap, which appeared to have fallen from her hand. Mechanically she took it up and opened it. It was a bank-note for five hundred dollars.

Mr. Clifton had taken it with him that morning to the Barrington estate, with its destined purpose.

Hazel strained her eyes and gazed at the note—gazed and gazed again. Where could it have come from? What brought it there? Suddenly the undoubted truth flashed upon her. Mr. Clifton had left it in her hand.

Her cheeks burned, her fingers trembled, her angry spirit rose up in arms. In that first moment of discovery she was ready to resent it as an insult; but when she came to remember the sober facts of the last few days her anger subsided into admiration of his wondrous kindness. Did he not know that she was without a home to call her own? without money—absolutely without money—save what would be given her in charity?

When Mr. Melborne reached New York, and the hotel which the Melbornes were in the habit of stopping, the first object his eyes lighted on was his own wife, whom he believed to be safe at Mount Pleasant. He inquired the cause.

Mrs. Melborne gave herself little trouble to explain. She had been in the city a day or two—could order her mourning so much better in person—and Charley did not feel well; so she brought him up for a change.

“I am sorry you came to the city, Dora,” remarked Mr. Melborne, after listening. “Hazel is gone to-day to Mount Pelasant.”

Mrs. Melborne quickly lifted her head.

“What’s she gone there for?”

“It is the most disgraceful piece of business altogether,” returned Mr. Melborne, without replying to the immediate question. “William Barrington has died worse off than a beggar, and there’s not a dollar for Hazel.”

“It never was expected there would be much.”

“But there’s nothing—not a penny; nothing for her

own personal expenses. I gave her twenty dollars the other day, for she was completely destitute."

Mrs. Melborne opened her eyes.

"Where will she live? What will become of her?"

"She must live with us. She—"

"With us!" interrupted Mrs. Melborne, her voice almost reaching a scream. "That she never shall!"

"She must, Dora. There is nowhere else for her to live. I have been obliged to decide it so, and she has gone to Mount Pleasant to-day."

Mrs. Melborne grew pale with anger. She rose from her seat and confronted her husband, the table being between them.

"Listen, Ray; I will not have Hazel Barrington under my roof. I hate her! How could you be cajoled into sanctioning such a thing?"

"I was not cajoled, and my sanction was not asked," he coldly replied. "I proposed it. Where else is she to be?"

"I don't care where," was the obstinate retort. "Never with us."

"She is at Mount Pleasant now—gone to it as her home, and even you, when you return, will scarcely venture to turn her out again into the world. She will not trouble you long," carelessly continued Mr. Melborne. "One so lovely as Hazel will be sure to marry early; and she appears as gentle and sweet-tempered a girl as I ever saw; so whence can arise your dislike for her? I don't pretend to guess. Many a man will be too ready to forget her want of fortune for the sake of her sweet face."

"She shall marry the first who asks her," snapped the angry lady. "I'll take care of that!"

CHAPTER XI.

HAZEL had been in her new home about ten days when Mr. and Mrs. Melborne arrived at Mount Pleasant. Mr. Melborne welcomed Hazel, and Mrs. Melborne also, after a fashion; but her manner was so repellent, so insolently patronizing that it brought the indignant crimson to Hazel's cheeks. And if this was the case at the first meeting, what do you suppose it must have been as time went on?

Galling slights, petty vexations, chilling annoyances were put upon her, trying her powers of endurance to the very length of their tether. She would wring her hands when alone, and passionately wish that she could find another refuge.

Mr. and Mrs. Melborne had two children, both boys, and in February the younger one, always a delicate child, died. This somewhat altered their plans. Instead of proceeding to New York after Easter, as had been decided upon, they would not go till May. In March Mr. Melborne went to Europe, full of grief for the loss of his boy—far greater grief than was experienced by Mrs. Melborne.

April approached, and with it Easter. To the unconcealed dismay of Mrs. Melborne, Mrs. St. Clare wrote that she required change, and should pass Easter with her at Mount Pleasant. Mrs. Melborne would have given her diamonds to have got out of it, but there was no escape. On a Monday in Passion Week the old lady arrived, and with her Captain Redmond St. Clare. They had no other guests. Things went on pretty smoothly till Good Friday.

On Good Friday afternoon Hazel strolled out with little Charley Melborne. Captain St. Clare joined them, and they never came in till nearly dinner time, when the three entered together, Mrs. Melborne doing penance all the time and nursing her rage against Hazel; for Mrs. St. Clare kept her in-doors. There was barely time to dress for dinner, and Hazel went straight to her room. Her dress was off, her dressing-gown on. Eno, her maid, was busy with her hair, and Charley chattering at her knee, when the door was opened and Mrs. Melborne entered.

“Where have you been?” demanded she, shaking with passion.

Hazel knew the signs.

“Strolling about in the shrubberies and grounds,” answered Hazel.

“How dare you disgrace yourself?”

“I do not understand you,” said Hazel, her heart beginning to beat unpleasantly. “Eno, you are pulling my hair.”

When women liable to intemperate fits of passion give rein to them they neither know nor care what they say. Mrs. Melborne broke into a torrent of reproach and abuse most degrading and unjustifiable.

"Is it not sufficient that you are allowed an asylum in my house, but you must also disgrace it? Three hours have you been hiding yourself with Redmond St. Clare! You have done nothing but flirt with him from the moment he came; you did nothing else at Christmas."

The attack was longer and broader, but that was the substance of it, and Hazel was goaded to resistance, to anger little less than that of Mrs. Melborne. This!—and before her maid, to be thus insultingly accused in the other's mad jealousy!

Hazel tossed her hair from the hands of Eno, rose up and confronted her accuser, constraining her voice to calmness.

"I do not flirt," she said. "I have never flirted. I leave that"—and she could not wholly suppress in tone the scorn she felt—"to married women; though it seems to me that it is a fault less venal in them than in single ones. There is but one inmate of this house who flirts, so far as I have seen since I have lived in it. Is it you or I, Mrs. Melborne?"

The home truth told on her. She turned white with rage, forgot her manners, and, raising her right hand, struck Hazel a stinging blow upon the cheek. Confused and terrified, Hazel stood in pain, and before she could speak or act she received a blow on the other cheek. Hazel shivered as with a sudden chill, and cried out, a sharp, quick cry, covered her outraged face, and sunk down upon the dressing-chair. Eno threw up her hands in dismay, and little Charley could not have burst into a louder roar had he been beaten himself. The boy—he was of a sensitive nature—was frightened. Mrs. Melborne finished up the scene by boxing Charley's ears for his noise, jerked him out of the room, and told him he was a monkey.

Hazel lay through the long night, weeping tears of anguish and indignation. She could not remain at Mount Pleasant—who would, after so great an outrage? Yet where was she to go? Fifty times in the course of the night did she wish she was laid beside her father, for her feelings obtained the mastery of her reason. In the calm moments she would have shrunk from the idea of death, as the young and healthy must do.

She rose on Saturday morning weak and languid—the

effects of the night of grief—and Eno brought her breakfast up. Charley stole into the room afterward; he was attached to her in a remarkable degree.

“Mamma is going out,” he exclaimed, in course of the morning. “Look, Hazel.”

Hazel went to the window. Mrs. Melborne was in the pony-carriage, Redmond St. Clare driving.

“We can go down now, Hazel; nobody will be there.”

She descended, and went down with the child; but scarcely were they in the drawing-room when a servant entered with a card.

“A gentleman, Miss Hazel, wishes to see you.”

“To see me?” returned Hazel, in surprise, “or Mrs. Melborne?”

“He asked for you, miss.”

She took up the card, “Mr. Clifton. Oh!” she uttered, in a tone of joyful surprise. “Show him in.”

The greatest events of our lives come to us without warning. A very simple occurrence it appeared to Mr. Clifton, this journey, and yet it was destined to lead to events that would end only with his own life.

Mr. Clifton entered, unaffected and gentlemanly as ever, with his noble form, his attractive face, and his drooping eyelids. She advanced to meet him, holding out her hand, her countenance betraying her pleasure.

“This is indeed unexpected!” she exclaimed. “How very pleased I am to see you.”

“Business brought me yesterday to Mount Pleasant. I could not leave it again without calling on you. I hear that Mr. Melborne is absent.”

“He is in Europe,” she rejoined. “I said we should be sure to meet again. Do you remember?”

She, also, remembered something—the five hundred dollar note—and what she was saying faltered on her tongue. Confused, indeed, grew she; for, alas! she had changed and partly spent it. How was it possible to ask Mrs. Melborne for money? and Mr. Melborne was nearly always absent.

Mr. Clifton saw her embarrassment, though he may not have detected its cause.

“What a fine boy!” exclaimed he, looking at the child.

“It is Charley Melborne,” said Hazel.

“A truthful, earnest spirit, I am sure. How old are you, my little man?”

"I am six, sir; and my brother was four."

Hazel bent over the child—an excuse to cover her perplexity.

"You do not know this gentleman, Charley. It is Mr. Clifton, and he has been very kind to me."

The child turned his thoughtful eyes on Mr. Clifton, apparently studying his countenance.

"I shall like you, sir, if you are kind to Hazel. Are you kind to her?"

"Very—very kind," murmured Hazel, leaving Charley and turning to Mr. Clifton, but not looking at him. "I don't know what to say. I ought to thank you; I did not intend to use the—to use it; but I—I—"

"Hush!" he interrupted, laughing at her confusion. "I do not know what you are talking of. I have a great misfortune to break to you, Miss Barrington."

Somewhat aroused from her own thoughts she lifted her eyes and her glowing cheeks.

"Two of your fish are dead—the gold ones."

"Are they?"

"I believe it was the frost that killed them. I don't know what else it could have been. You may remember those bitter days we had in January; they died then."

"You are very good to take care of them all this while. How is the Barrington estate looking?—dear Barrington estate! Is it occupied?"

"Not yet. I have spent some money on it, and it repays the outlay."

The excitement of his arrival had worn off, and she was looking herself again, pale and sad. He could not help observing that she was changed.

"I can not expect to look as well at Mount Pleasant as I did at the Barrington estate."

"I trust it is a happy home to you?" said Mr. Clifton, speaking upon impulse.

She glanced up at him, a look that he would never forget.

"It is a miserable home, and I can not remain in it. I have been awake all night, thinking where I can go, but I can not tell; I have not a friend."

Never let people talk secrets before children, for be assured that they comprehend a great deal more than is expedient. The saying that "little pitchers have big ears" is

wonderfully true. Little Charley held his head up to Mr. Clifton:

"Hazel told me this morning that she should go away from us. Shall I tell you why? Mamma beat her yesterday when she was angry."

"Be quiet, Charley," interrupted Hazel, her face in a flame.

"Two great slaps upon her cheeks," continued the child, "and Hazel cried so, and I screamed, and then mamma hit me. But boys are made to be hit; nurse said so. Eno came into the nursery when we were at tea, and told nurse about it. She says Hazel's too good-looking, and that's why mamma—"

Hazel stopped the child's tongue, rang a peal of the bell, and marched him to the door, dispatching him to the nursery by the servant who answered it.

Mr. Clifton's eyes were full of indignant sympathy.

"Can this be true?" he asked, in a low tone, when she returned to him. "You do indeed want a friend."

"I must bear my lot," she replied, obeying the impulse which prompted her to confide in Mr. Clifton; "at least, till Mr. Melbourne returns."

"And then?"

"I really do not know," she said, the rebellious tears rising faster than she could choke them down. "He has no other home to offer me; but with Mrs. Melbourne I can not and will not remain. She would break my heart, as she has already well-nigh broken my spirit. I have not deserved it from her."

"No, I am sure you have not," he warmly answered. "I wish I could help you. What can I do?"

"You can do nothing," she said. "What can any one do?"

"I wish I could help you," he repeated. "Barrington was not, take it for all in all, a pleasant home to you, but it seems you changed for the worse when you left."

"Not a pleasant home?" she echoed, its reminiscences appearing delightful in that moment, for it must be remembered that all things are estimated by comparison. "Indeed it was. I may never have so pleasant a one again. Oh, Mr. Clifton, do not disparage Barrington to me! Would that I could awake and find the last few months a hideous dream!—that I could find my dear father alive

again!—that we were still living peacefully on the Barrington estate. It would be a very Eden to me now.”

What was Mr. Clifton about to say? What emotion was it that agitated his countenance, impeded his breath, and dyed his face blood red? His better genius was surely not watching over him now, or those words had never been spoken.

“There is but one way,” he began, taking her hand and nervously playing with it, probably unconscious that he did so; “and that way—I may not presume, perhaps, to point it out.”

She looked at him, and waited for an explanation.

“If my words offend you, Miss Barrington, check them as their presumption deserves, and pardon me. May I—dare I—offer you to return to the Barrington estate as its mistress?”

She did not comprehend him in the slightest degree; the drift of his meaning never dawned upon her.

“Return to the Barrington estate as its mistress?” she repeated.

“As my wife!”

No possibility of misunderstanding him now, and the shock and surprise were great.

She had stood there by Mr. Clifton’s side, conversing confidentially with him, esteeming him greatly, feeling as if he was her truest friend on earth, clinging to him in her heart as to a powerful haven of refuge, loving him almost as she would love a brother, suffering her hand to remain in his. But to be his wife! The idea had never presented itself to her in any shape until this moment, and her mind’s first emotion was one of opposition, her first movement to express it, as she essayed to withdraw herself and her hand away from him.

But not so. Mr. Clifton did not suffer it. He not only retained that hand, but took the other also, and spoke, now the ice was broken, eloquent words of love. Not unmeaning words of rhapsody, about hearts and darts and dying for her, such as somebody else might have given utterance to, but earnest-hearted words of deep tenderness, calculated to win upon the mind’s good sense as well as upon the ear and heart; and it may be that, had her imagination not been filled up with that “somebody else,” she would have said “Yes” then and there.

They were suddenly interrupted. Mrs. Melborne entered and took in the scene at a glance: Mr. Clifton's bent attitude of devotion, his imprisonment of the hands, and Hazel's perplexed and blushing countenance. She threw up her head and her little inquisitive nose, and stopped short on the carpet, her freezing looks demanded an explanation as plainly as looks can do it. Mr. Clifton turned to her, and, by way of sparing Hazel, proceeded to introduce himself. Hazel had just presence of mind left to name her "Mrs. Melborne."

"I am sorry that Mr. Melborne, to whom I have the honor of being known, should be absent," he said. "I am Mr. Clifton."

"I have heard of you," replied Mrs. Melborne, scanning his good looks, and feeling cross that his homage should be given where she saw it was given; "but I had not heard that you and Hazel Barrington were on the extraordinary terms of intimacy that—that—"

"Madame," he interrupted, as he handed a chair to her and took another himself, "we have never yet been on terms of intimacy. I was begging Miss Barrington to grant that we might be. I was asking her to become my wife."

The avowal was a shower of incense to Mrs. Melborne, and her ill-humor melted into sunshine. It was a solution to her great difficulty, a loop-hole by which she might get rid of her, the hated Hazel. A flush of gratification lighted her face, and she became full of graciousness to Mr. Clifton.

"How very grateful Hazel must feel to you," quoth she; "I speak openly, because I know that you were cognizant of the unprotected state in which she was left by her father's improvidence, putting marriage for her, at any rate, a high marriage, nearly out of the question. The Barrington estate is a beautiful place, I have heard."

"For its size. It is not large," replied Mr. Clifton, as he rose, for Hazel had also risen and was coming forward.

"And pray, what is Hazel's answer?" quickly asked Mrs. Melborne, turning to her.

Not to her did Hazel condescend to give an answer; but she approached Mr. Clifton and spoke in a low tone.

"Will you give me a few hours for consideration?"

"I am only too happy that you should ask for time to consider, for it speaks to me of hope," was his reply, as

he opened the door for her to pass out. "I will be here again this afternoon."

It was a perplexing debate that Hazel held with herself in the solitude of her room while Mr. Clifton touched upon ways and means to Mrs. Melborne.

Hazel liked Mr. Clifton much. She experienced pleasure in conversing with him; she liked to be with him; in short, but for the ill-omened fancy which crept over her there would have been danger of her falling in love with Mr. Clifton. And oh! to be removed forever from the bitter dependence on Mrs. Melborne. The Barrington estate would, in truth, after that seem what she called it—Eden.

"So far it looks favorable," mentally exclaimed poor Hazel; "but there is the other side of the question. It is not only that I do not love Mr. Clifton, but I fear I do love, or very nearly love, Captain St. Clare. I wish he would ask me to be his wife—or that I had never seen him."

Hazel's soliloquy was interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Melborne and Mrs. St. Clare. What Mrs. Melborne had said to the old lady to win her to the cause was best known to herself, but she was eloquent in it. They both used every possible argument to accept Mr. Clifton, the old lady declaring that she had never been introduced to any one she was so much taken with (and Mrs. St. Clare was incapable of asserting what was not true); that he was worth a dozen empty-headed men of the great world.

Hazel listened, now swayed one way, now the other; and when the afternoon came her head was aching with perplexity. The stumbling-block that she could not get over was Redmond St. Clare. She saw Mr. Clifton's approach from her window, and went down to the drawing-room, not in the least knowing what her answer was to be. A shadowy idea was presenting itself that she would ask him for longer time and write her answer.

In the drawing-room was Redmond St. Clare, and her heart beat wildly, which said beating might have convinced her that she ought not to marry another.

"Where have you been hiding yourself?" cried he. "Did you hear of our mishap with the pony-carriage?"

"No," was her answer.

"I was driving Dora into town. The pony took fright, kicked, plunged, and went down upon his knees; she took fright in turn, got out, and walked back; so I gave the

brute some chastisement and a race, and brought him to the stables, getting home in time to be introduced to Mr. Clifton. He seems an out-and-out good fellow, Hazel, and I congratulate you."

"What!" she uttered.

"Don't start. We are all in the family, and Mrs. Melbourne told me. I won't betray it abroad. She says the Barrington estate is a place to be coveted. I wish you happiness."

"Thank you," she returned, in a sarcastic tone, though her heart beat and her lips quivered. "You are premature in your congratulations, Captain St. Clare."

"Am I? Keep my good wishes, then, till the right man comes. I am beyond the pale myself, and dare not think of entering the happy state," he added, in a pointed tone. "I have indulged dreams of it, like others, but I can not afford to indulge them seriously. A poor man, with uncertain prospects, can only play the butterfly, perhaps to his life's end."

He quitted the room as he spoke. It was impossible for Hazel to misunderstand him, but a feeling shot across her mind, for the first time, that he was false and heartless. One of the servants appeared, showing in Mr. Clifton. Nothing false or heartless about him. He closed the door and approached her, but she did not speak, and her lips were white and trembling. Mr. Clifton waited.

"Well," he said, at length, in a gentle tone, "have you decided to grant my prayer?"

"Yes. But—" She could not go on. What with one agitation and another, she had difficulty in conquering her emotion.

"But—I was going to tell you—"

"Presently," he whispered, leading her to a sofa; "we can both afford to wait now."

"Oh, Hazel, you have made me very happy!"

"I ought to tell you—I must tell you," she began again, in the midst of hysterical tears, "though I have said 'yes' to your proposal, I do not—yet— It has come upon me by surprise," she stammered. "I like you very much, I esteem and respect you, but I do not yet love you."

"I should wonder if you did. But you will let me earn your love, Hazel?"

"Oh, yes!" she earnestly answered.

He drew her close to him, bent his face, and took from her lips his first kiss. Hazel was passive; she supposed he had gained the right to do so.

“My dearest, it is all I ask.”

Mr. Clifton stayed over the following day, and before he departed in the evening arrangements had been discussed. The marriage was to take place immediately. All concerned had a motive for hurrying it on. Mr. Clifton was anxious that the fair flower should be his; Hazel was sick of Mount Pleasant, sick of some of the people in it; Mrs. Melborne was sick of Hazel. In less than a month it was to be, and Captain St. Clare sneered over the “indecent haste.” Mr. Clifton wrote to Mr. Melborne. Mrs. Melborne announced that she should present Hazel with the *trousseau*, and wrote to New York to order it. It is a positive fact that when he was taking leave of Hazel she fairly clung to him.

“I wish I could take you now, my darling! I can not bear to leave you here.”

“I wish you could!” she sighed. “You have only seen the sunny side of Mrs. Melborne.”

CHAPTER XII.

THE sensations of Mr. Clifton when he returned to Barrington were very much like those of a college boy who knows he has been in mischief and dreads detection. Always open as to his own affairs, for he had nothing to conceal, he yet deemed it expedient to dissemble now. He felt that his sister would be bitter at the prospect of his marrying. Instinct had taught him that in years past, and he believed that of all women, the most objectionable to her would be Hazel; for Miss Clifton looked to the useful, and had neither sympathy nor admiration for the beautiful. He was not sure but she might be capable of endeavoring to frustrate the marriage, should news of it reach her ears, and her indomitable will had carried many strange things in her life; therefore, you will not blame Mr. Clifton for observing entire reticence as to his future plans.

A family by the name of Mead had been about taking the Barrington estate. They wished to rent it, furnished, for three years. Upon some of the minor arrangements

they and Mr. Clifton were opposed; but the latter declined to give way. During his absence at Mount Pleasant news had arrived from them that they acceded to all his terms, and would enter upon the Barrington estate as soon as convenient.

Miss Clifton was full of congratulations. It was off their hands, she said; but the first letter Mr. Clifton wrote was to decline them. He did not tell this to his sister. The final touches to the house were given preparatory to the reception of its inhabitants, three maid and two men-servants hired and sent there until the family should arrive.

One evening, three weeks subsequent to Mr. Clifton's visit to Mount Pleasant, Lulu Osborne called on Miss Clifton, and found them going to dinner much earlier than usual.

"We dine earlier," said Miss Clifton, "otherwise Harold would not have dined."

"I am as well without dinner," he said. "I have a mass of business to get through yet."

"You are not so well without it," said Fannie, "and I don't choose that you should go without it. Take off your hat, Lulu. He does things like nobody else; he is off to Mount Pleasant to-morrow, and never could open his lips till just now that he was going."

"Is that invalid gentleman still laid up at Mount Pleasant?" asked Lulu.

"He is there still," said Mr. Clifton.

Lulu sat down to the dinner-table, though protesting that she ought not to remain, for she had told her mamma she should be home to dinner. Miss Clifton interrupted what she was saying by telling her brother she should go presently and pack his things.

"Oh, no," returned he, with alarming quickness. "I will pack them myself, thank you. John, you can put the gripsack in my room—the large one."

"The large one!" echoed Miss Clifton, who could never let anything pass without her interference. "Why, it's as big as a house! What in the world can you want dragging that with you?"

"I have papers and things to take besides clothes."

"I am sure I could pack all your things in a small one," persisted Fannie. "I'll— You only tell me what you want put in. Take the small gripsack to Mr. Clifton's room."

Mr. Clifton glanced at John, and John glanced back again with an imperceptible nod.

"I prefer to pack my things myself, Fannie. What have you done now?"

"A stupid trick," she answered. "For in fidgeting with a knife Fannie had cut her finger. "Have you any court-plaster, Harold?"

He opened his pocket-book and laid it on the table, while he took from it some black plaster.

Miss Clifton's inquisitive eyes caught sight of a letter lying there. She stretched out her hand, caught it up, and opened it.

"Whom is this from? It is a lady's handwriting."

Mr. Clifton laid his hand flat upon it, as if to hide it from view.

"Excuse me, Fannie, that is a private letter."

"Private nonsense!" retorted Miss Clifton. "I am sure you get no letters that I may not read. It bears yesterday's postmark."

"Oblige me with the letter," he returned; and Miss Clifton, in her astonishment at the calmly authoritative tone, yielded it.

"Harold, what is the matter with you?"

"Nothing," answered he, shutting the letter in the pocket-book and returning it to his pocket, leaving out the plaster for Fannie's benefit. "It's not fair to look into a man's private letters; is it, Lulu?" He laughed good-humoredly as he looked at Lulu. But she had seen with surprise that a deep flush of emotion had risen to his face—he, so calm a man! Fannie was not one to be put down easily, and she returned to the charge.

"Harold, if ever I saw the Barrington crest, it is on the seal of that letter."

"Whether the Barrington crest is on the letter or not, the contents of it were written for my eyes alone," he rejoined. And somehow Miss Clifton did not like the firm tone.

Lulu broke the silence.

"Shall you call on the Melbornes this time?"

"Yes," he answered.

"Do they talk yet of Miss Barrington's marrying?" pursued Lulu. "Did you hear anything of it?"

"I can not charge my memory with all I hear or did not hear, Lulu."

Lulu sprung up the moment the dinner was over.

"I don't know what mamma will say to me; and it is beginning to grow dark! She will think it is late for me to be out alone."

"Harold can walk with you," said Fannie.

"I don't know that," said he, in his plain, open way. "Faber is waiting for me in the office, and I have some hours' work before me. However, I suppose you won't care to put up with John's attendance; so make haste with your hat."

No need to tell Lulu that, when the choice between him and John depended on the speed she should make. It was a calm, lovely night, very light yet, and they took the field way.

Lulu could not forget Hazel Barrington. She had never forgotten her, or the jealous feeling that arose in her heart at Mr. Clifton's constant visits to the Barrington estate when she inhabited it. She returned to the subject now.

"I asked you, Harold, whether you heard that Miss Barrington was likely to marry."

"And I answered you, Lulu, that my memory could not carry all I may have heard."

"But did you?" persisted Lulu.

"I believe Miss Barrington is likely to marry."

Lulu drew a relieved sigh.

"Whom?"

The same amused smile played on his lips.

"Do you suppose I could put premature questions? I may be able to tell you more about it after my next return from Mount Pleasant."

"Do try and find out," said she. "Perhaps it is to Mr. Charles Melborne. Who is it says that more marriages arise from habitual association than—"

She stopped, for Mr. Clifton had turned his eyes upon her, and was laughing.

"You are a clever guesser, Lulu; Charles Melborne is a little fellow five or six years old."

"Oh!" returned Lulu, considerably discomfited.

"And the nicest child—generous-hearted, earnest-spirited. Should I have children of my own," he added, "I could wish them to be like Charley Melborne."

"A very important confession," gayly returned Lulu, "after contriving to impress Barrington with the conviction that you were to be an old bachelor."

"I don't know that I ever promised Barrington anything of the sort," said Mr. Clifton.

Lulu laughed now.

"I suppose Barrington judges by appearances when a man owns to thirty years."

"Which I do not," said Mr. Clifton, considerably damaging the grass and Lulu's parasol, which he had taken possession of. "I may be an old married man before I am thirty; the chances are that I shall be."

"Then you must have fixed upon your wife," she quickly cried.

"I do not say I have not, Lulu. All in good time to proclaim it."

Lulu withdrew her arm from Mr. Clifton's under pretense of fixing her hat. Her heart was beating, her whole frame trembling, and she feared he might detect her emotion. She never thought he could allude to any one but herself. Poor Lulu!

"How flushed you look, Lulu!" he exclaimed. "Have I walked too fast?"

She seemed not to hear. Then she took his arm again, and they walked on, Mr. Clifton striking the grass with the parasol more industriously than ever. Another minute, and the handle was in two.

"I thought you would do it," said Lulu, while he was regarding the parasol with ludicrous dismay. "Never mind; it is an old one."

"I will bring you another to replace it. What is the color? Brown. I won't forget. Hold the relics a minute, Lulu."

He put the pieces in her hand, and taking out a note-case, made a note in pencil.

"What's that for?" she inquired.

He held it close to her eyes, that she might discern what he had written:

"Brown parasol. L. O."

"A reminder for me, Lulu, in case I forget."

Lulu's eyes detected another item or two already entered in the note-case: "Piano," "Plate."

"I got down the things as they occur to me that I must

get in New York," he explained. "Otherwise I should forget half."

"In New York! I thought you were going in an opposite direction—to Mount Pleasant."

It was a slip of the tongue, but Mr. Clifton repaired it.

"I may probably have to visit New York, as well as Mount Pleasant. How bright the moon looks rising there, Lulu!"

"So bright—that or the sky—that I saw your secrets," answered she. "Piano! Plate! What can you want with either, Harold?"

"They are for Barrington," he quietly replied.

"Oh! for the Meads;" and her interest in the items was gone.

They turned into the road and soon reached the house. Mr. Clifton held the gate open for Lulu.

"You will come in and say good-night to mamma? She was saying to-day what a stranger you have made of yourself lately."

"I have been busy, and I really have not the time to-night. You must remember me to her instead."

He closed the gate again. But Lulu leaned over it, unwilling to let him go.

"Shall you be away a week?"

"I dare say I may. Here, take the wreck of the parasol, Lulu; I was about to carry it off with me. I can buy you a new one without stealing the old one."

"Harold, I have long wished to ask you something," said she, in a tone of suppressed agitation, as she took the pieces and flung them on the path by the thick trees. "You will not deem me foolish?"

"What is it?"

"When you gave me the gold chain and locket a year ago—you remember?"

"Yes—well?"

"I put some of that hair of Tom's in it, and some of mamma's and Mary's, and there is room for more, you see."

She held it out to him as she spoke, for she always wore it round her neck attached to the chain.

"I can't see well by this light, Lulu. If there is room for more, what of it?"

"I like to think that I possess a memento of my best friends, or of those who were dear to me. I wish you to give me a little bit of your hair to put with the rest—as it was you who gave me the locket."

"My hair!" returned Mr. Clifton, in a tone of as much astonishment as if she had asked for his head. "What good would that do you, Lulu?"

Her face flushed painfully, her heart beat.

"I like to have a remembrance of friends I—I care for," she stammered—"nothing more, Harold."

He detected neither the emotion nor depth of feeling—the kind of feeling that had prompted the request, and he met it with good-natured ridicule.

"What a pity you did not tell me yesterday, Lulu! I had my hair cut and might have sent you the snippings. Don't be a goose, child! I can't stop a minute longer. Good-night!"

He hastened away with quick strides, and Lulu covered her face with her hands.

"What have I done—what have I done?" she reiterated aloud. "Is it in his nature to be thus indifferent—matter-of-fact? Has he no sentiment? But it will come. Oh! the bliss this night has brought forth. There was truth in his tone, beneath its vein of mockery, when he spoke of his chosen wife. I need not go far to guess who it is—he has told no one else, and he pays attention to no one but me. Harold, when once I am your wife you shall know how fondly I love you; you can not know till then."

She lifted her fair young face, beautiful in its radiance, and gazed at the deepening moonlight, then turned away and pursued her path up the garden walk, unconscious that something wearing a bonnet pushed its head beyond the trees to steal a look after her. Lulu would have said less had she divined there was a third party to the interview.

It was three mornings after the departure of Mr. Clifton that Mr. Faber appeared before Miss Clifton and handed her a letter, saying it was from Mr. Clifton.

"Why, what has he got to write to me about?"

She opened the letter, glanced at it, and sunk down on a chair, more overcome, more stupefied than she had felt in her whole life.

“MOUNT PLEASANT, *May 1st*, 18—.

“MY DEAR FANNIE,—I was married this morning to Hazel Barrington, and hasten briefly to acquaint you with the fact. I will write you more fully to-morrow or next day, and explain all things.

“Ever your affectionate brother,

“HAROLD CLIFTON.”

“It is a hoax!” were the first guttural sounds that escaped from Miss Clifton’s throat when speech came to her.

Mr. Faber only stood like a stone image.

“It is a hoax, I say!” raved Miss Clifton. “What are you standing there for, like a gander on one leg?” she reiterated, venting her anger upon the unoffending man. “Is it a hoax or not?”

“I am overdone with amazement, Miss Clifton. It is not a hoax. I have had a letter, too.”

“It can’t be true—it can’t be true! He had no more thought of being married when he left here, three days ago, than I have.”

“How can we tell that, Miss Clifton? How are we to know he did not go to be married? I fancy he did.”

“Go to be married!” shrieked Miss Clifton, in a passion. “He would not be such a fool!”

“He has sent this to be put in the newspapers,” said Mr. Faber, holding forth a scrap of paper. “He is married, sure enough.”

Miss Clifton took it and held it before her; her hand was cold as ice, and shook as if with palsy.

“Married: On the first inst., at Mount Pleasant, by the Reverend Astor Gilbert, Harold Clifton to Hazel Barrington, only child of the late William Barrington, of the Barrington estate.”

Miss Clifton tore the paper to atoms and scattered it. Mr. Faber afterward made copies from memory, and sent them to the journal offices.

“I will never forgive him,” she deliberately uttered, “and I will never forgive or tolerate her. The senseless idiot, to go and marry William Barrington’s expensive daughter! A thing who goes to balls in flowers and a train streaming out three yards behind her!”

"He is not an idiot, Miss Clifton."

"He is worse; he is a wicked madman!" she retorted, in a midway state between rage and tears. "He must have been stark, staring mad to go and do it! And had I gathered an inkling of it, I would have taken out a commitment of lunacy against him. Ay, you may stare, old Faber, but I would, as truly as I hope to have my sins forgiven. Where are they to live?"

"I expect they will live on the Barrington estate."

"What?" screamed Miss Clifton. "Live on the Barrington estate with the Meads? You are going mad, too, I think."

"The negotiations with the Meads are off, Miss Clifton. When Mr. Clifton returned from Mount Pleasant, at Easter, he wrote to decline them. I saw the copy of the letter. I expect he had settled matters then with Miss Barrington, and had decided to keep the Barrington estate for himself."

Miss Clifton's mouth had opened with consternation. Recovering partially, she rose from her seat, and drawing herself to her full and majestic height, she advanced behind the astounded gentleman, seized the collar of his coat with both hands, and shook him for several minutes. Poor Faber, who, short and slight, was as a puppet in her hands, thought his breath had gone forever.

"I would have had out lunacy papers for you also, you sly villain! You are in the plot. You have been aiding and abetting him. You knew as much of it as he did."

"I declare solemnly to the God that made me, I did not! I am as innocent as a baby. When I got the letter now in the office you might have knocked me down with a feather."

"What has he done it for?—an expensive girl without a dollar! I hope his folly will come home to him!" was the wrathful rejoinder.

"Heaven forbid!" cried old Faber.

She sat down as soon as she was alone, and her face assumed a strong, rigid look. Her hands fell upon her knees, and Mr. Clifton's letter dropped to the ground. After awhile her features began to work, and she nodded her head; and by and by she rose, attired herself for the street, and started for Judge Osborne's. She felt that the news which would be poured out to Barrington before the day

was over reflected a slight upon herself—her much-loved brother had forsaken her, to take to himself one nearer and dearer, and had done it in dissimulation; therefore she herself would be the first to proclaim it far and wide.

Lulu was at the window in the usual sitting-room as Miss Clifton entered the gate. A grim smile, in spite of her enraged feelings, crossed that lady's lips when she thought of the blow about to be dealt out to Lulu—to her hopes of becoming his wife. Very clearly had she penetrated to the love of that young lady for Harold.

“What brings Fannie here?” thought Lulu, who was looking very pretty in her summer attire; for the weather was unusually warm, and she had assumed it. “How are you?” she said, leaning from the window. “Would you believe it? the warm day has actually tempted mamma out; papa is driving her to Hillsdale. Come in; the hall door is open.”

Miss Clifton came in without answering, and seating herself upon a chair, emitted a few dismal groans by way of preliminary.

Lulu turned to her quickly. “Are you ill? Has anything happened to you?”

“Happened me? You may say that!” ejaculated Miss Clifton, in wrath. “It has turned my heart and my feelings inside out. What did you say? A glass of wine? Nonsense! don't talk of wine to me. A heavy misfortune has befallen us, Lulu. Harold—

“Upon Harold?” interrupted Lulu, in her quick alarm. “Oh! some accident has happened to him—to the railway train! Perhaps he—he—has got his leg broken?”

“I wish in my heart he had!” warmly returned Miss Clifton. “He and his legs are all right, more's the pity! It is worse than that, Lulu!”

Lulu ran over various disasters in her mind, and knowing the bent of Miss Clifton's disposition, began to refer to some pecuniary loss.

“Perhaps it is about the Barrington estate,” hazarded she. “The Meads may not be coming to it.”

“No, they are not coming to it,” was the tart retort; “somebody else is, though. My wise brother Harold has gone and made a fool of himself, Lulu, and now is coming home to live on the Barrington estate.”

Though there was much that was unintelligible to Lulu

in this, she could not suppress the flush of gratification that rose to her cheek and dyed it with blushes.

"You are going to be taken down a notch or two, my lady," thought the clear-sighted Miss Clifton. "The news fell upon me this morning like a thunder-bolt," she said aloud. "Old Faber brought it to me, and I shook him for his pains."

"Shook old Faber?" said the wondering Lulu.

"I shook him till my arms ached. He won't forget it in a hurry."

Lulu sat, all amazement, without the faintest idea of what Fannie could mean.

"You remember that child, William Barrington's daughter? I think I see her now. All very well for her, for what she is, but not for us."

"What of her?" uttered Lulu.

"Harold has married her!"

In spite of Lulu's full consciousness that she was before the penetrating eyes of Miss Clifton, and in spite of her own efforts for calmness, her features turned to a ghastly whiteness. But, like Miss Clifton, she at first took refuge in disbelief.

"It is not true, Fannie!"

"It is quite true. They were married yesterday at Mount Pleasant. Had I known it then, though the church ceremony had passed, I should have tried to part them. But yesterday was one thing, and to-day is another; and of course nothing can be done now."

"Excuse me an instant," gasped Lulu, in a low tone; "I forgot to give an order mamma left for the servants."

An order for the servants! She swiftly passed upstairs to her own room, and flung herself down on the floor in utter anguish. The past had cleared itself of its mists; the scales that were before Lulu's eyes had fallen from them. She saw now that while she had cherished false and delusive hopes in her almost idolatrous passion for Harold Clifton, she had never been cared for by him. Even the previous night she had lain awake some of its hours, indulging dreams of the sweetest fantasy—and that was the night of his wedding-day! With a sharp wail of despair Lulu flung her arms up and closed her aching eyes. She knew that from that hour her life's sunshine had departed.

The cry had been louder than she knew, and one of the maids, who was outside the door, opened it gently and looked in. There lay Lulu, and there was no mistaking that she lay in dire anguish—not of body, but of mind. The servant quickly closed the door.

Lulu heard the click of the latch, and it recalled her to herself—recalled her to the necessity for outwardly surmounting the distress at the present moment. She rose up and drank a glass of water, mechanically smoothed her hair and her brow, so contracted with pain, and forced her manner to calmness.

“Married to another!—married to another!” she moaned, as she went down the stairs; “and that other she! Oh, fortitude! oh, dissimulation! at least come to my aid before his sister!”

There was actually a smile on her face as she entered the room.

Miss Clifton broke open her grievance again without delay.

“I never thought he would marry; I have warned him against it ever since he was a boy.”

“It is an unsuitable match,” said Lulu.

“It is just as suitable as Beauty and the Beast in the children’s story. She, a high-born beauty, brought up to revel in expense, in jewels, in feasts, in show; and he, a—a—a—dull bear of a lawyer, like the Beast in the tale.”

Had Lulu been less miserable, she would have laughed outright.

“I have taken my resolution. I go to the Barrington estate to-morrow and discharge those five dandies of servants. I was up there on Saturday, and had I known then that they were Harold’s servants, and not hired for the Meads—”

Lulu said nothing.

“I shall go up and dismiss the lot, and remove myself and servants to the Barrington estate, and let my own house furnished. Expenses will be high enough with her extravagant habits, too high to keep on two households. And a fine sort of household Harold would have of it at Barrington with that ignorant baby befrilled, and bejeweled, and becurled to direct it!”

“But will she like that?”

“If she does not like it she can lump it,” replied Miss

Clifton. "And now that I have told you the news, Lulu, I am going back, and I would almost as soon have had to tell you he was put in his coffin."

"Are you sure you are not jealous?" asked Lulu, some uncontrollable impulse prompting her to say it.

"Perhaps I am," returned Miss Clifton, with asperity. "Perhaps, had you brought up a boy as I have brought up Harold, and loved nothing else in the world, far or near, you would be jealous when you found him discarding you with contemptuous indifference, and taking a young wife to his bosom to be more to him than you had been."

CHAPTER XIII.

MISS CLIFTON was as good as her word. She quitted her own house, and removed to the Barrington estate with John and two of her maid-servants. In spite of Mr. Faber's grieved remonstrances, she discharged the servants whom Mr. Clifton had engaged, all save one man. She might have retained one of the maid-servants, for she had the sense to remember, in spite of her prejudices, that the Barrington estate would require more servants than her own house.

On Friday night, about a month after the wedding, Mr. Clifton and his wife came home. They were expected, and Miss Clifton went through the hall to receive them, and stood on the upper steps between the pillars of the arched door. An elegant carriage, with four milk-white horses, was drawn up. Miss Clifton compressed her lips as she scanned it. She was attired in a handsome dark silk dress and a new cap; her anger had cooled down in the last month, and her strong common sense told her that the wiser plan would be to make the best of it. Mr. Clifton came up the steps with Hazel.

"You here, Fannie? That was kind. How are you? Hazel, this is my sister."

Hazel put forth her hand, and Miss Clifton condescended to touch the tips of her fingers.

"I hope you are well?" she jerked out.

Mr. Clifton left them together, and went back to search for some trifle which had been left in the carriage. Miss Clifton led the way to a sitting-room.

"Perhaps you would like to go up and take your things off," she said, in the same jerky tone.

"Thank you; I would like to go to my rooms. I do not require any dinner. We have dined," said Hazel.

"Then what would you like to take?"

"Some tea, if you please; I am very thirsty."

"Tea!" ejaculated Miss Clifton. "So late as this! I don't know that they have any made. You'd never sleep a wink all night if you took tea at this late hour."

"Oh! then never mind," replied Hazel. "It is of no consequence. Do not let me give you any trouble."

Miss Clifton whisked out of the room, upon what errand was best known to herself. Meanwhile, Hazel sat down and burst into tears and sobs. A chill came over her; it did not seem like coming home to the Barrington estate. Mr. Clifton entered and witnessed her grief.

"Hazel!" he uttered in amazement, as he hastened to her. "My darling, what is the matter?"

"I am tired, I think," she gently answered; "and coming into the house again made me think of papa. I should like to go to my rooms, Harold; but I don't know which they are."

Neither did Mr. Clifton know; but Miss Clifton came whisking in again, and said:

"The best rooms. Shall I go up with Hazel?"

Mr. Clifton preferred to go himself, and he held out his arm to Hazel. There were no lights, and the rooms looked cold and comfortless.

"Things seem all sixes and sevens in the house," remarked Mr. Clifton. "I fancy the servants must have misunderstood my letter, and have not expected us until to-morrow night."

"Harold," she said, "I do feel very tired, and—and—low-spirited. May I remain up here and not go down again to-night?"

He looked at her and smiled.

"May you not go down again to-night? Have you forgotten that you are at last in your own home? A happy home I trust it will be, my darling. I will strive to render it so."

She leaned upon him and sobbed aloud. He tenderly bore with her mood, soothing her to composure, gently kissing the face he held to him now and then. Oh, his was a

true heart! but alas! it was just possible that he might miss the way, unless he could emancipate himself from his sister's thralldom. Hazel did not love him; of that she was conscious; but her deep and earnest hope by night and day was that she might learn to love him, for she knew that he deserved it.

They heard Eno's voice, and Hazel turned, poured out some water, and began dashing it over her face and eyes. She did not care that Eno, who was haughtily giving orders about some particular trunk, should see her grief.

"What will you take, Hazel?" asked Mr. Clifton—"some tea?"

"No, thank you," replied she, remembering Miss Clifton's answer.

"But you must take something; you complained of thirst in the carriage."

"Water will do—will be the best for me, I mean. Eno can get it for me."

Mr. Clifton quitted the room, and the lady's-maid assisted her mistress in sullen silence, her tongue quivering with its own rage and wrongs. Eno deemed herself worse used than any lady's-maid ever had been yet. From the very hour of the wedding her anger had been gathering, for there had been no gentleman valet to take care of her during the wedding journey. Bad enough! but she came home to find that there was no staff of servants at all; no house-keeper, no steward, no—as she expressed it—nobody. Moreover, she and Miss Clifton had just come to a clash. Eno was loftily calling about her in the hall for somebody to carry up a small parcel, which contained, in fact, her lady's dressing-case, and Miss Clifton had desired her to carry it up herself. But that she had learned who the lady was, Eno, in her indignation, might have felt inclined to throw the dressing-case at her head.

"Anything else, Mrs. Clifton?"

"No," replied Hazel; "you may go."

Hazel, wrapped in her dressing-gown, her warm slippers on, sat with a book; and Eno, wishing her good-night, retired. Mr. Clifton, meanwhile, had sought his sister.

"Fannie," he began, "I do not understand all this. I don't see my servants and I see yours. Where are mine?"

"Gone away," said Miss Clifton, in her decisive off-hand manner.

"Gone away?" responded Mr. Clifton. "What for? I believe they were excellent servants."

"Very excellent! Harold Clifton, how could you go and make a fool of yourself? If you must marry, were there not plenty of young ladies in your old set—"

"Stop," he interrupted. "I wrote you a full statement of my motives and actions; I concealed nothing that it was necessary you should know. I am not disposed to enter upon a further discussion of the subject, and you must pardon my saying so. Let us return to the topic of the servants. Where are they?"

"I sent them away because they were superfluous incumbrances," she hastily added, as he would have interrupted her. "We have four in the house, and your wife has brought a fine maid, I see, making five. I have come up here to live."

Mr. Clifton felt checkmated. He had always bowed to the will of his sister, but he had an idea that he and his wife would be better without her.

"And your own house?" he exclaimed.

"I have let it furnished; the people entered to-day. You can not turn me out of the Barrington estate into the road or to furnished rooms, Harold. There will be enough expense without our keeping on two houses, and most people, in your place, would jump at the prospect of my living here. Your wife will be mistress. I do not intend to take her honors from her; but I shall save her a great deal of trouble in management, and be as useful to her as a house-keeper. She will be glad of that, inexperienced as she is. I dare say she never gave a domestic order in her life."

This was a view of the case to Mr. Clifton so plausibly put that he began to think it might be all for the best. He had great reverence for his sister's judgment; force of habit is strong upon all of us. Still he did not know.

"There is certainly room for you at my house, Fannie, but—"

"A little too much," put in Miss Fannie. "I think a house half its size might content us all, and still have been grand enough for your wife."

"This house is mine," said Mr. Clifton.

"So is your folly," rejoined Miss Clifton.

"And with regard to servants," proceeded Mr. Clifton, passing over the remark, "I shall keep as many as I deem

necessary. I can not give my wife splendor, but I will give her comfort. The horses and carriage will take one man's—"

Miss Clifton turned faint all over.

"What are you talking of?"

"I bought a pretty open carriage in the city, and a pair of ponies for it."

"Oh, Harold! the sins you are committing."

"Sins!" echoed Mr. Clifton.

"Willful waste makes woful want."

"It may be a sin where you can not afford it. To spend wisely is neither a squander nor a sin. Never you fear, Fannie, that I shall run beyond my income."

"Say at once that an empty pocket is better than a full one," angrily returned Miss Clifton.

"Did you buy that fine piano which has arrived?"

"It was my present to Hazel."

Fannie groaned.

"What did it cost?"

"The cost is of no consequence. The old piano here was a bad one, and I bought a better."

At that moment John entered with some hot water. Mr. Clifton rose, and looked on the sideboard.

"Where's the wine, John?"

The servant put it out—port and sherry.

Mr. Clifton drank a glass, and then proceeded to mix some wine and water.

"Shall I mix some for you, Fannie?" he asked.

"I'll mix for myself if I want any. Who is that for?"

"Hazel."

He quitted the room, carrying the wine and water, and entered his wife's room. She was sitting half buried, it seemed, in the arm-chair, her face muffled up. As she raised it, he saw that it was flushed and agitated; that her eyes were bright and her frame was trembling.

"What is the matter?" he hastily asked.

"I got nervous after Eno went," she whispered, laying hold of him, as if for protection from terror; "I was hoping somebody would come up."

"I have been talking to Fannie. But what made you nervous?"

"Oh, I was very foolish! I kept thinking of frightful

things; they would come into my mind. Do not blame me, Harold. This room is the one papa died in."

"Blame you, my darling?" he said.

"I thought of a dreadful story about the bats, that the servants told—I don't think you ever heard it; and I kept thinking. Suppose they were at the windows now, behind the blinds? And then I was afraid to look at the bed; I fancied I might see— You are laughing!"

Yes, he was smiling, for he knew that these moments of nervous fear are best met jestingly. He made her drink the wine and water, and then he showed her where the bell was, ringing it as he did so.

"Your rooms shall be changed to-morrow, Hazel."

"No, let us remain in these. I shall like to feel that papa was once their occupant. I won't get nervous again."

But even as she spoke her actions belied her words. Mr. Clifton had gone to the door, and opened it, and she flew close up to him.

"Shall you be very long, Harold?" she whispered.

"Not more than an hour," he answered. But he hastily put back one hand and held her tightly in his protecting grasp. Eno was coming along the corridor in answer to the bell.

"Have the goodness to let Miss Clifton know that I am not coming down again to-night."

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Clifton shut the door, and then looked at his wife and laughed.

"He is very kind to me," thought Hazel.

With the morning began the perplexities of Hazel's life. But first of all, just fancy the group at the breakfast-table. Miss Clifton descended in the startling costume of the night before, took her seat at the table, and there sat bolt upright. Mr. Clifton came down next; and then Hazel entered in an elegant half-mourning dress with flowing ribbons.

"Good-morning. I hope you slept well," was Miss Clifton's salutation.

"Quite well, thank you," Hazel answered, as she took her seat.

The breakfast passed off almost in silence. When it was ended Hazel rose from her chair, like a bird released from its cage, and stood by her husband's side.

"Have you finished, Harold?"

"I think I have, dear; oh! here's my coffee. There, I have finished now."

"Let us go around the grounds."

He rose, laid his hands playfully on her waist, and looked at her.

"You may as well ask me to take a journey to the moon. It is past nine, and I haven't been to the office for a month."

The tears rose to her eyes.

"I wish you could stay with me! I wish you could always be with me!"

"I will be with you as much as ever I can, my dearest," he whispered. "Come and walk with me through the park."

She ran for her hat, and when she returned they went out together.

He thought it a good opportunity to speak about his sister.

"She wishes to remain with us," he said. "I do not know what to decide. On the one hand, I think she might save you the worry of household management; on the other, I fancy we shall be happier by ourselves."

Hazel's heart sunk within her at the idea of that stern Miss Clifton mounted over her as a resident guard; but, refined and sensitive, almost painfully considerate of the feelings of others, she raised no word of objection. As he and Miss Clifton pleased, she answered.

"Hazel," he said, with grave earnestness, "I wish it to be as you please; that is, I wish matters to be arranged as may best please you; and I will have them so arranged. My chief object in life now is your happiness. It can be tried for a month or two, and we shall see how it works," he musingly observed.

They reached the park gates.

"I wish I could go with you and be your clerk," she cried, unwilling to release his hand. "I should not have all that long way to go back by myself."

He laughed and shook his head, telling her that she wanted to bribe him into taking her back; but it could not be; and away he went after saying farewell.

Hazel wandered back, and then wandered through the rooms. They looked lonely, not as they had seemed to look in her father's time. In her dressing-room knelt Eno unpacking. She rose when Hazel entered.

"Can I speak to you a moment, Mrs. Clifton?"

"What is it?"

Then Eno poured forth her tale. That she feared so small an establishment would not suit her, and she would like to leave at once—that day. Anticipating it, she had not unpacked her things.

"There has been some mistake about the servants, Eno, but it will be remedied as soon as possible. And I told you before I married, that Mr. Clifton's establishment would be a limited one."

"I could put up with that; but I never could stop in the house with that"—"that female Guy" had been on the tip of Eno's tongue; but she remembered in time of whom she was speaking—"with Miss Clifton. I fear we have both got tempers that would clash, and might be flying at each other; I could not stay for untold gold. So when I have finished unpacking I hope you will allow me to go."

Hazel would not condescend to ask her to remain; but she wondered how she should manage without a maid.

"What is the amount due to you?"

"I have not had time to reckon it up."

Hazel made out the account, and laid it down in gold and silver on the table.

"It is more than you deserve, Eno," she remarked, "and more than you would get in most places. You ought to have given me proper notice."

Eno melted into tears, and began a string of excuses. Hazel quitted the room in the midst of it, and in the course of the day Eno took her departure, Sally telling her that she ought to be ashamed of herself.

"I couldn't help myself," retorted Eno, "and I'm sorry to leave her, for she is a pleasant young lady to serve."

So Eno left. And when Hazel went to her room to dress for dinner, Sally entered.

"I am not much accustomed to ladies' maids' duties," said she, "but Miss Clifton has sent me to do what I can for you if you will allow me."

Hazel thought it was kind of Miss Clifton.

"And if you will trust me with your things, I will take charge of them until you are suited with a maid," Sally resumed.

"Thank you," Hazel answered; "you are good."

Sally did her best, and in future years Hazel found in her both a faithful servant and friend.

Half an hour later Hazel walked out to the entrance of the park, and there met her husband. She looked like an exquisite picture, and his heart beat quicker as he felt she was his own. A smile stole over his lips as he looked at her. He drew her hand within his arm and they walked on, and then she told him about Eno.

He felt annoyed, and said she must get another maid with all speed.

"You have kept dinner waiting more than half an hour," began Miss Clifton, in a loud tone of complaint, to her brother, meeting them in the hall, "and I thought you must be lost," she added to Hazel.

He hastily answered her that he could not get away from the office earlier, and went up to his dressing-room. Hazel hurried after him, dreading some outbreak of Miss Clifton's displeasure.

There was an explosion on the following morning. Mr. Clifton ordered the pony-carriage for church, but his sister interrupted him.

"Harold! what are you thinking of? I will not permit it."

"Permit what?" asked Mr. Clifton.

"The cattle to be taken out on Sunday. I am a religious woman," she added, turning sharply to Hazel, "and I can not countenance Sunday traveling. I was taught my catechism."

Hazel did not feel comfortable. She knew that a walk to St. Paul's Church and back in the present heat would exhaust her for the day, but she shrunk from offending Miss Clifton's prejudices. She was standing at the window with her husband.

"Harold, perhaps if we walk very slowly it will not hurt me," she softly whispered.

He smiled, and whispered in return:

"Be quite ready at half past ten."

"Well, is she going to walk?" snapped Fannie, as Hazel left the room.

"No; she could not bear to walk in this heat, and I shall not allow her to walk."

"Is she made of glass, that she'd melt?"

"She is a gentle, tender plant, one that I have taken to my bosom and vowed to love and cherish; and I will do so."

He spoke in a firm tone, almost as sharp as Fannie, and left the room. Fannie raised her hand and pressed it to her temples, as if something pained her there.

The carriage came round, a beautiful equipage, and Hazel was ready. As Mr. Clifton drove slowly down the dusty road they came upon Fannie walking along in the sun, with a great umbrella over her head. She would not turn to look at them.

Once more, as in the year gone by, St. Paul's Church was in a flutter of expectation. It expected to see a whole paraphernalia of bridal finery, and again it was doomed to disappointment, for Hazel had not put off mourning for her father. She was in black, a soft lace which hung in graceful folds showing her exquisite figure. For the first time Mr. Clifton took possession of the pew belonging to the Barrington estate.

Lulu was there. Her face wore a gray dusky hue, of which she was only too conscious, but could not subdue. Her covetous eyes would wander to that other face with its singular loveliness and its sweetly earnest eyes, sheltered under the protection of him whose sheltering protection she had so long yearned.

After services were over John brought the carriage. Standing outside of the gate, talking to the rector's family, were several ladies, one of them Lulu Osborne. She watched Mr. Clifton place his wife in the carriage; she watched him drive away. Lulu's very lips were white as she bowed in return to his greeting.

"The heat is so great," murmured Lulu, when those around noticed her paleness.

"Ah! you ought to have gone home in the carriage with your father as he desired you."

"I wish to walk," returned the unhappy Lulu.

"What a pretty girl!" said Hazel to her husband.

"What is her name?"

"Lulu Osborne."

CHAPTER XIV.

HAZEL was in her dressing-room talking to Sally. She had grown to like Sally very much, and was asking her

whether she would continue to wait upon her, as the maid for whom she had written was not well enough to come.

Sally's face lighted up with pleasure at the proposal.

"Oh, you are very kind! I should so like it. I would serve you faithfully to the best of my ability; and I know I could do your hair well, if you allowed me to try."

Hazel laughed.

"But Miss Clifton may not be inclined to transfer you."

"I think she would be; she said a day or two ago that I appeared to suit you, and you might have me altogether if you wished."

She was about to speak further, when a knock came to the dressing-room door. Sally went to open it, and saw one of the house-maids recently engaged. Hazel heard the colloquy:

"Is Mrs. Clifton there?"

"Yes."

"Some visitors. John ordered me to come and tell you. Say, Sally, it's the Osbornes, and she's with them. I watched her get out of the carriage."

"Who?"

"Why, Miss Osborne. Only fancy her coming to pay the wedding visit here. Mrs. Clifton had better take care that she don't get a cup of poison mixed for her. Mr. Clifton is out, or else I'd have given a dollar to see the interview between the three."

Sally sent the girl away, shut the door, and turned to Hazel, quite unconscious that the half-whispered conversation had been audible.

"Some visitors in the drawing-room, Mrs. Clifton. Ann says Mr. and Mrs. Osborne and daughter."

Hazel descended, her mind full of the mysterious words spoken by Ann. The judge was looking obstinate and pompous; Mrs. Osborne pale, delicate and lady-like; Lulu beautiful. Such was the impression they made upon Hazel.

They paid rather a long visit. Hazel quite fell in love with the gentle and suffering Mrs. Osborne, who had risen to leave when Miss Clifton came into the room and insisted that Lulu should remain and dine with them.

Lulu's face turned crimson; but nevertheless she accepted the invitation.

Dinner-time approached, and Hazel went up to dress for

it. Sally was waiting, and entered upon her duties at once, as Mrs. Clifton sat down to have her hair brushed.

"Which dress shall I lay out, Mrs. Clifton?"

"Sally, what was that I heard you and Ann gossiping over at the door?" Hazel suddenly asked. "About Miss Osborne giving me a cup of poison. You should tell Ann not to whisper so loudly."

Sally smiled, though she was rather confused.

"It was only a bit of nonsense, of course. The fact is that people think Miss Osborne was much attached to Mr. Clifton—really in love with him—and many thought it would be a match. But I don't fancy she would have been the one to make him happy with all her love."

A hot flush passed over the face of Hazel; a sensation very like jealousy flew to her heart. No woman likes to hear that another is or has been attached to her husband; a doubt always arises whether the feeling may not have been reciprocated.

Hazel descended. She wore a costly black lace dress, its low body and sleeves trimmed with white lace as costly, and ornaments of jet. She looked inexpressibly beautiful, and Lulu turned from her with a sickening jealousy—from her beauty, from her attire. Lulu looked well, too; she was dressed in light blue silk and her pretty cheeks were damask with her mind's excitement. On her neck she wore the gold chain given to her by Mr. Clifton—she had not discarded that.

They stood together at the window, looking at Mr. Clifton as he came up the avenue. He saw them, and nodded. Hazel watched the damask cheeks turn to crimson at the sight of him.

"How do you do, Lulu?" he said, as he shook hands. "Come to pay us a visit at last? You have been tardy over it. And how are you, my darling?" he said, bending over his wife. But she missed his kiss of greeting. She would not have him give it to her in the presence of another, but she was in the mood to notice the omission.

Dinner over, Miss Clifton beguiled Lulu out-of-doors. Lulu went unwillingly; she would rather be in his presence than away from it; and she could not help feeling this although he was the husband of another.

They came upon the gardener, and Miss Clifton got into a discussion with him, a somewhat warm one. She insisted

upon having certain work done in a certain way, he standing to it that Mr. Clifton had ordered it done in another. Lulu grew tired and returned to the house.

Hazel and her husband were in the adjoining room, at the piano, and Lulu had the opportunity of hearing that sweet voice.

"There, Harold! I am sure I have sung to you ten songs at least," she said, leaning her head back against him and looking at him from her upturned face. "You ought to pay me."

He did pay her, holding the dear face to him, and taking from it some impassioned kisses. Lulu turned to the window, a low moan of pain escaping her, as she pressed her forehead on one of its panes and looked forth at the dusky night. Hazel came in on her husband's arm.

"Are you here alone, Miss Osborne? I really beg your pardon. I thought you were with Miss Clifton."

"Where is Fannie, Lulu?"

"I have just come in," was Lulu's reply. "I dare say she is following me."

The evening went on to ten, and as the time-piece struck the hour, Lulu rose from her chair in amazement.

"I did not think it was so late. Surely some one must have come for me."

"I will inquire," was Hazel's answer; and Mr. Clifton rang the bell. No one had come for Miss Osborne.

"Then I fear I must trouble John," said Lulu. "Mamma must have gone to rest tired, and papa must have forgotten me. It would never do for me to get locked out."

"As you were one night before," said Miss Clifton, significantly.

She alluded to the night when Lulu was in the grove of trees with her unfortunate brother.

"Oh, don't, Miss Clifton!" she uttered on the impulse of the moment; "don't recall it."

Hazel wondered.

"Can John take me?" continued Lulu.

"I had better take you," said Mr. Clifton. "It is late."

Lulu's heart beat at the words; it beat as she put her hat on, as she said good-night to Hazel and Miss Clifton; it beat to throbbing as she went out with him and took his

arm, all just as it used to be—only that he was now the husband of another.

It was a warm, lovely June night, not moonlight, but bright with its summer's starlight. They went down the park into the road, which they crossed, and soon came to a stile. From that stile there led a path through the fields which would pass the back of Judge Osborne's. Lulu stopped at it.

"Would you choose the field way to-night, Lulu? The grass will be damp, and this is the longest way."

"But we shall escape the dust of the road."

"Oh! very well, if you prefer it. It will not make three minutes' difference."

"He is very anxious to get home to her!" mentally exclaimed Lulu. "I shall fly out upon him presently, or my heart will burst!"

Mr. Clifton crossed the stile, helped over Lulu, and then gave her his arm again.

Mr. Clifton walked on, utterly unconscious of the storm that was raging within her. More than that, he was unconscious of having given cause for one, and dashed into topics indifferent and commonplace in the most provoking manner.

"When does your father begin hay-making, Lulu?"

There was no reply; Lulu was trying to keep down her emotion. Mr. Clifton tried again.

"Lulu, I asked you which day your father cuts hay?"

Still no reply. Lulu was literally incapable of making one. Her throat was working, the muscles of her mouth began to twitch, and a convulsive sob, or what sounded like it, broke from her. Mr. Clifton turned his head hastily.

"Lulu, are you ill? What is it?"

On it came, passion, temper, wrongs, hysterics. Mr. Clifton half carried, half dragged her to the second stile, and placed her against it, his arm supporting her; and an old cow and two calves, wondering what the disturbance could mean at that sober time of night, walked up and stared at them.

Lulu struggled with her emotion—struggled bravely, and the sobs and the hysterical symptoms subsided; not the excitement or the passion.

She put away his arm, and stood with her back to the

stile, leaning against it. Mr. Clifton felt inclined to fly to the pond for water, only he had nothing but his hat to get it in.

"Are you better, Lulu? What can have caused all this?"

"What can have caused it!" she burst forth, in passionate uncontrol. "You can ask me that?"

Mr. Clifton was struck dumb; but by some inexplicable law of sympathy a dim and very unpleasant consciousness of the truth began to steal over him.

"I don't understand you, Lulu. If I have offended you in any way I am truly sorry."

"Truly sorry, no doubt! What do you care for me? If I go under the sod to-morrow"—stamping it with her foot—"you have your wife to care for. What am I?"

"Hush!" he interposed, glancing round, more mindful for her than she was for herself.

"Hush—yes! What is my misery to you? I would rather be in my grave, Harold Clifton, than endure the life I lead. My pain is greater than I know how to bear."

"I can not affect to misunderstand you," he said, feeling extremely annoyed and vexed. "But, my dear Lulu, I never gave you cause to think that I—that I—cared for you more than I did care."

"Never gave me cause!" she gasped. "When you have been coming to our house constantly, almost like my shadow; when you gave me this"—dashing open her mantle and holding up the locket to view—"when you have been more intimate with me than a brother?"

"There, Lulu! there it is—as a brother. I have been nothing else; it never occurred to me to be anything else," he added, in his straightforward truth.

"Ay, as a brother. Nothing else?" and her voice arose once more with excitement; it seemed that she would not long control it. "What cared you for my feelings? what recked you that you gained my love?"

"Lulu, hush!" he implored; "do be calm and reasonable. If I ever gave you cause to think I regarded you with deeper feeling, I can only express to you my deep regret and assure you it was done unconsciously."

She was growing calmer. The passion was fading, leaving her face still and white; she lifted it toward Mr. Clifton,

"If she had not come between us, should you have loved me?"

"I don't know. How can I know? Do I not say to you, Lulu, that I only thought of you as a friend, as a sister? I can not tell what might have been."

"I could bear it better, but that it was known," she said. "All Barrington had coupled us together in their prying gossip, and they have only pity for me now. I would far rather you had killed me, Harold!"

"I can but express to you my deep regret," he repeated; "I can only hope you will soon forget it all. Let the remembrance of this conversation pass away with to-night; let us still be to each other as friends—as brother and sister. Believe me," he concluded, in a deeper tone, "the confession has not lessened you in my estimation."

He made a movement as though he would get over the stile, but Lulu did not stir; the tears were silently coursing down her pallid face. At that moment there was an interruption.

"Is that you, Miss Lulu?"

Lulu started as if she had been shot.

On the other side of the stile stood Cora, one of the Osborne's maids. How long might she have been there? She began to explain that Mr. Osborne had sent their man-servant out, and Mrs. Osborne thought it better to wait no longer for the man's return, so had sent her for Miss Lulu.

"You need not come any further now," she said to him, in a low tone.

"I shall see you home," was his reply; and he held out his arm.

Lulu took it.

They walked on in silence. Arriving at the house, Harold took both Lulu's hands in his.

"Good-night, Lulu! Heaven bless you and make you happy!"

She had had time for reflection, and the excitement gone, she saw her outbreak in all its shame and folly. Harold noticed how subdued and white she looked.

"I think I have been mad," she groaned; "I must have been mad to say what I did. Forget that it was uttered."

"I told you I would."

"Thank you. Good-night!"

But he still retained her hands.

"In a short time, Lulu, I trust you will find one more worthy to receive your love than I have been."

"Never," she impulsively answered. "I do not love and forget so lightly. In the years to come, in my old age, I shall still be nothing but Lulu Osborne."

Harold walked away in a fit of musing. The revelation had given him pain.

"I heartily hope she will soon find somebody to her liking and forget me," was his concluding thoughts. "As to living and dying Lulu Osborne, that is all moonshine; the sentimental rubbish that girls like to—"

"Harold!"

He was passing the very last tree in the park, the nearest to his house, and the interruption came from a dark form standing under it.

"Is it you, my dearest?"

"I came out to meet you. Have you not been very long?"

"I think I have," he answered, as he drew his wife to his side and walked on with her. "We met one of the servants at the second stile, but I went all the way."

"You have been intimate with the Osbornes?"

"Quite so."

"Do you think Lulu pretty?"

"Very."

"Then, intimate as you were, I wonder you never fell in love with her."

Harold laughed—a very conscious laugh, considering the recent interview.

"Did you, Harold?"

The words were spoken in a low tone; almost, or he fancied it, in a tone of emotion; and he looked at her in amazement.

"Did I what, Hazel?"

"You never loved Lulu Osborne?"

"Loved her! What is your mind running on, Hazel? I never loved but one woman, and that one I made my wife."

Oh! what a pity he did not make this noble, true woman his confidant, and then his would not have been the sad portion of years of untold suffering.

CHAPTER XV.

Not a day passed but Miss Clifton, by dint of hints and innuendoes, contrived to impress upon Hazel the unfortunate blow to his own interests that Mr. Clifton's marriage had been, the ruinous expense she had entailed upon the family. It struck a chill to Hazel's heart, and she became painfully imbued with the incubus she must be to Mr. Clifton. But to be told continually by his sister that she was a blight upon his prospects was enough to turn her heart to bitterness. Oh! that she had the courage to speak out openly to her husband, that he might by a single word of earnest love and assurance have taken the weight from her heart and rejoiced it with the truth. But she never did. When Fannie lapsed into her grumbling mood, she would hear in silence or gently bend her aching forehead in her hands, never retorting.

So things went on. One morning early in April a little baby Clifton arrived. Baby needed a great deal of attention, and of course the next thing was to get a good nurse for her. Hazel did not get strong very quickly; fever and weakness had a struggle with each other and with her. One day, when she was dressed and sitting in her easy-chair, Miss Clifton entered.

"Of all the servants in Barrington, who should you suppose is come up after the place of nurse?" she said to Hazel.

"Indeed, I can not guess."

"Why, Cora—Mrs. Osborne's maid. The years she has been with them, and now leaves in consequence of a quarrel with Lulu. Will you see her?"

"Is she likely to suit? Will she make a good nurse?"

"She's steady and respectable, but she has got a tongue as long as from here to Hillsdale."

"That won't hurt the baby," said Hazel. "But if she has lived as lady's-maid, she probably does not understand the care of infants."

"Yes, she does. She was head nurse at Judge Miller's before going to Mrs. Osborne's."

"I will see her," said Hazel.

The nurse was introduced—a tall, pleasant-looking

woman with black eyes. Hazel inquired why she was leaving Mrs. Osborne's.

"It is through Miss Lulu's temper. For this year past nothing has pleased her; she has grown nearly as imperious as the judge himself. I have threatened many times to leave, and last evening we came to another outbreak, and I left this morning."

"Left entirely?"

"Yes, Mrs. Clifton. Miss Lulu provoked me so that I said last night I would leave as soon as breakfast was over. And I did so. I should be very glad to take your situation, if you would please try me."

"Possibly this situation might not suit you so well as you imagine. I have great confidence in Sally, and in case of my illness or absence Sally would superintend the nursery, and you would be under her."

"I should not mind that," was the applicant's answer. "I like Sally."

Cora was therefore engaged, and was to enter upon her new service the next morning.

In the afternoon succeeding it Hazel was lying on her sofa in her bedroom, asleep, as was supposed. In point of fact, she was in that state of sleep, half-wakeful delirium, which those who suffer from weakness and fever know only too well. Suddenly she was aroused from it by hearing her own name mentioned in the adjoining room, where sat Sally and Cora, the latter holding the sleeping infant on her knee, the former sewing, the door between the rooms being ajar.

"How ill she looks!" observed Cora.

"Who?" asked Sally.

"Mrs. Clifton. She looks as if she'd never get over it."

"She is getting over it quickly now," returned Sally.

"If you had seen her a week ago you would not say she was looking ill now."

"My! would not somebody's hopes be up again if anything should happen?"

"Nonsense!" crossly returned Sally.

"You may say 'nonsense' forever, Sally, but they would," went on Cora. "And she would snap him up to a dead certainty; she'd never let him escape her a second time. She is as much in love with him as she ever was."

"It was all talk and fancy," said Sally. "Barrington must be busy. Mr. Clifton never cared for her."

"That's more than you know. I have seen a little, Sally; I have seen him kiss her."

"A pack of rubbish! That tells nothing."

"I don't say it does; he gave her that locket and chain she wears."

"Who wears?" retorted Sally, determined not graciously to countenance the subject. "I don't want to hear anything about it."

"Who, now! Why, Miss Lulu. She has hardly had it off her neck since. My belief is she wears it in her sleep."

"More simpleton she!" echoed Sally.

"The night before he left Barrington to marry Mrs. Clifton—and didn't the news come upon us like a thunderbolt!—Miss Lulu had been to see Miss Clifton, and he brought her home. A lovely night it was, the moon rising, and nearly as light as day. He somehow broke her parasol in coming home, and when they got to our gate there was a love scene."

"Were you a third in it?" demanded Sally.

"Yes, without meaning to be. I was expecting somebody that evening, and I was in the trees waiting for him. Up came Mr. Clifton and Miss Lulu. She wanted him to go in, but he would not, and they stood there. Something was said about the locket, and about his giving her a piece of his hair to put in it. I could not catch the words distinctly, and I did not dare to stir nearer, for fear of their hearing me. It was a regular love scene. I could hear enough for that. If anybody thought to be Mrs. Clifton, Lulu Osborne did that night."

"Why, you great baby, you have just said it was the night before he went to be married!"

"I don't care; she did. After he was gone I saw her lift up her hands and face in ecstasy, and say he could never know how much she loved him until she was his wife. Be you very sure, Sally, many a love passage had passed between them two; but I suppose when his wife was thrown in his way he couldn't resist her and her beauty, and the old love was cast over. It is in the nature of man to be fickle, especially those who can boast of their own good looks, like Mr. Clifton."

"Mr. Clifton's not fickle."

“ I can tell you some more yet. Two or three days after that Miss Clifton came up to our house with the news of his marriage. I was in Mrs. Osborne’s room, and they were in the room underneath, the windows open, and I heard Miss Clifton tell the tale, for I was leaning out. Up came Miss Lulu on an excuse and flew into her room, and I went into the hall. A few moments, and I heard a noise; it was a sort of wail or groan, and I opened the door softly, fearing she might be fainting. Sally, if my heart never ached for anybody, it ached then. She was lying on the floor, her hands clinched together, and her poor face all white, like one in mortal agony. I’d have given anything to say a word of comfort to her; but I didn’t dare to interfere with such sorrow as that. I came out again and shut the door without her seeing me.”

“ How thoroughly stupid she must have been!” uttered Sally, “ to go caring for one who did not care for her.”

“ I tell you, Sally, you don’t know that he did not care. You are as obstinate as the judge. And I wish to goodness you wouldn’t interrupt me. They came up here to pay the wedding visit, and if you have got any memory at all, you can’t fail to recollect it. Miss Lulu remained to dine with the Cliftons.”

“ I remember it.”

“ I was sent to accompany her home in the evening. I came the field way, for the dust by the road was enough to smother one, and at the last stile but one, what do you think I came upon?”

Sally lifted her eyes.

“ A snake, perhaps?”

“ I came upon Miss Lulu and Mr. Clifton. What had passed, nobody knows but themselves. She was leaning her back against the stile, crying, sobs breaking from her like one might expect to hear from a breaking heart. It seemed as if she had been reproaching him, as if some explanation had passed, and I heard him say that from thenceforth they could only be a brother and sister. I spoke soon, for fear they should see me, and Mr. Clifton got over the stile. Miss Lulu said to him that he need not come any further, but he just held out his arm and came with her to the gate. I went on to open the door, and I saw him with his head bent down to her and her two hands

held in his. We don't know how it was between them, I tell you."

"She is a darn fool to suffer herself to love him still!" uttered Sally, indignantly.

"So she is; but she does do it. She'll often steal out to the gate about the time she knows he'll be passing, and watch him go by, and not letting him see her. It is nothing but her unhappiness, her jealousy that makes her so cross. I assure you, Sally, in the past year she has so changed that she's not like the same person. If Mr. Clifton should ever get tired of his wife, and—"

"Cora," harshly interrupted Sally, "have the goodness to recollect yourself."

"Well, I say if anything happens to Mrs. Clifton, Miss Lulu will step into her shoes as sure as fate."

"Nothing is going to happen," returned Sally, with composure.

"I hope it is not, now or later—for the sake of this dear little innocent thing upon my lap," went on the undaunted Cora. "She would not make a very kind step-mother, for it is certain that where the first wife had been hated her child won't be loved. She would turn Mr. Clifton against her—"

"I tell you what it is, Cora," interrupted Sally, in a firm, unmistakable tone, "if you think to pursue these sort of topics in this house, I shall inform Mrs. Clifton that you are unsuitable for the situation."

"I dare say."

"Another word, Cora; it appears to me that you have carried on a prying system in Mrs. Osborne's house. Do not attempt such things in this."

"You were always one of the straight-laced sort, Sally," said Cora, laughing good-humoredly. "But now that I have had my say out, I shall stop, and you need not fear I should be such a simpleton as to go prattling of this kind of thing to the servants."

Now, just fancy this conversation penetrating to Hazel! She heard it, every word. It is all very well to oppose the argument, "Who attends to the gossip of servants?"

A nice state of excitement she worked herself into as she lay there; jealousy and fear—ay, and love, too, playing pranks with her brain. When Mr. Clifton entered he was

startled to see her; her pallid cheeks were burning with a red hectic, and her eyes glistened with fever.

"Hazel, you are worse!" he uttered, approaching her quickly.

She partially arose from the couch and clasped hold of him in her emotion.

"Oh, Harold, Harold!" she uttered, "don't marry her! I could not rest in my grave!"

Mr. Clifton, in his puzzled astonishment, believed her to be laboring under some temporary hallucination, the result of weakness. He set himself to soothe her, but it seemed that she could not be soothed. She burst into a storm of tears and began again in wild tones:

"She would ill-treat my child; she would draw your love from it and from my memory. Harold, you must not marry her!"

"You must be speaking from the influence of a dream, Hazel," he soothingly said. "You have been asleep, and are not yet awake. Be still, and recollection will return to you. There, love, rest upon me."

"To think of her as your wife brings pain enough to kill me. Promise me you will not marry her; Harold, promise it!"

"I will promise you anything in reason," he replied, bewildered with her words; "but I do not know what you mean. There is no possibility of my marrying any one, Hazel. You are my wife."

"But if I die? I may—you know I may—and many think I shall. Do not let her usurp my place, will you, dear?"

"Indeed she shall not, whoever you may be talking of. What have you been dreaming? Who is it that is troubling your mind?"

"Harold, do you need to ask? Did you love no one before you married me? Perhaps you have loved her since—perhaps you love her still?"

Mr. Clifton began to discern "method in her madness." He changed his cheering tone to one of grave earnestness.

"Of whom do you speak, Hazel?"

"Of Lulu Osborne."

Ah! Harold Clifton, now again another chance is given you to make your wife your confidant, but you let the

golden opportunity go by. Will you have another chance before it is too late?

He knit his brow; he was both annoyed and vexed. What ever had put this by-gone nonsense into his wife's head? He quitted the couch where he had been supporting her, and stood upright before her, calm, dignified, almost solemn in his seriousness.

"Hazel, what notion you can possibly have picked up about myself and Lulu Osborne I am unable to conceive. I never loved Lulu Osborne; I never entertained the faintest shadow of love for her, either before my marriage or since. You must tell me what has given rise to this idea in your mind."

"But she loved you."

A moment's hesitation—for of course Mr. Clifton was conscious.

"If she did give her love to me, I can only say I was entirely unconscious of it. Believe me, you have as much cause to be jealous of Fannie as you have of Lulu Osborne."

Hazel sighed; it was a sigh of relief, and her breath grew calmer. She felt inexpressibly reassured. Mr. Clifton bent his head, and spoke in a tender but pained tone.

"I had not thought that the past year was thrown away. What proof can a man give of true and earnest love that I have not given to you?"

"Don't be angry with me, Harold; the trouble and doubt would not have risen had I cared for you less."

He smiled again his own fond smile.

CHAPTER XVI.

A FEW years had passed on.

"I should recommend a change of scene, Mr. Clifton—say some place by the sea. Sea-bathing might do wonders."

"Should you think it well for her to go so far from home?"

"I should. Where there is any chronic or confirmed disorder, one we can grapple with, I don't care a straw for change of scene or air; a patient is as well at home as away; a certain treatment must be gone through, surgical or physical, and it is of little moment whether it is pursued on

a mountain or by the sea. But in these cases of protracted weakness, where you can do nothing but try and coax the strength back again, change of scene and air are of immense benefit."

"I will propose it to her," said Mr. Clifton.

"I have just done so," replied Dr. Dorne. "She met it with objection, which I expected, for invalids naturally feel a disinclination to move from home. But it is necessary that she should go."

The object of their conversation was Hazel. There were three children now at the Barrington estate: Ethel, Frank, and Harold, the latter twelve months old. Hazel had, a month or two back, been attacked with illness. She recovered from it; that is, recovered from the disorder, but it had left her in an alarming state of weakness.

Hazel was unwilling to take Dr. Dorne's advice to go so far from home. She certainly was looking very ill; her features were white and attenuated, her sweet sad eyes had grown larger and darker, her hands were hot and sickly. Though warm weather, she had generally a shawl folded round her, and would sit for hours without rousing herself, as those suffering from great weakness like to do; would sit gazing out on the calm landscape or watching her children at play. She went out once a day in a closed carriage, and that was all; no other exertion could she be aroused to make.

In this illness the old trouble had come back again—the sore feeling touching her husband and Lulu Osborne. It had lain pretty dormant in the last few years, nothing having occurred to excite it, but Hazel was in that state of weakness where grievances, let them be old or new, grow upon the mind. Her thoughts would wander to the unsatisfactory question, whether Mr. Clifton had ever truly loved her, or whether, lured by her beauty, he had married her, loving Lulu Osborne.

Mr. Clifton's demonstrative affection, shown so greatly for her in the first year or so of their married life, had subsided into calmness. Is not a similar result arrived at by every husband that the church ever made one with woman? It was not that his love had faded, but that time and custom had wrought their natural effects. Look at children with their toys; a boy with a new drum, a girl with a new doll. Are not the playthings kissed, and hugged, and

clasped in arms, and never put down? Did ever playthings seem like them? Are not all other things neglected, or submitted unwillingly—the reading lessons, the sports, the daily works, even the pudding at dinner, while the new toy is all in all? But wait. A little time, and the drum (if it has escaped breakage) is consigned to the dark closet, the doll to its cradle, and neither of them is visited or looked at. Tell the children to go and get their lately cherished playthings to make their evening's amusements, and they will go unwillingly (if they don't openly rebel), for they are tired of them. Do we not all, men and women, become indifferent to our toys when we hold them securely in possession?

Hazel did not understand the even manner, the quiet calmness into which her husband's once passionate love had subsided, and in her fanciful jealousy she attributed it to the influence Lulu held upon his memory. She looked for the little tender episodes of daily life. When she compared him with other men, and saw how far he surpassed them, how noble and good he was, how little the rest looked beside him, her heart rose up with pride at the consciousness of being his wife. A princess might have deemed it an honor to be the chosen of such a man as Harold Clifton. Spare one little corner of his heart to Lulu Osborne! No, indeed; Hazel could not afford that.

On the day that the journey was finally decided, Hazel was in the drawing-room with her three children; even the little fellow was sitting on the carpet. Ethel was a delicate, pretty child in her fifth year; Frank was the very image of his mother; Harold was like his father.

"Come here, my darlings!" she cried.

Ethel and Frank ran to her, and she placed an arm around each. Master Harold was kicking his heels on the carpet at a distance.

They looked up at their mother.

"Would my darlings like to go with mamma down by the sea in a boat?"

Ethel—she had inherited the refined, sensitive feeling of her mother—replied only by a smile and a vivid blush. Frank clapped his hands.

"Oh, yes, in a boat! And baby Harold, too, mamma?"

"Baby Harold and all," answered Hazel. "And Sally and Cora, and—"

Miss Clifton, who was seated near one of the windows, sewing, turned sharply round to interrupt the gladness. Miss Clifton, though not openly dissenting, did not inwardly approve of the proposed trip.

"What did people want with change of air?" thought she. She had never wanted any. A pack of new-fangled notions that doctors had got into, recommending change of air for everything! They'd order it next for a cut finger. If Hazel would make an effort she'd get strong fast enough at home.

"The children are not going to the sea-side," said she. "They are not ordered there."

"But they must go with me," replied Hazel. "Of course they are not expressly ordered to it. Why should they not go?"

"Why should they not?" retorted Miss Clifton. "Why, on account of the expense, to be sure. I can tell you what it is, Hazel, what with one expense and another your husband will soon be on the road to ruin. Your journey with Sally and John will cost enough, without taking a van load of nurses and children."

Hazel's heart sunk within her.

"Besides, your object in going is to pick up health, and how can you do that if you are to be worried with children?" pursued Miss Clifton. "People who go abroad for pleasure, or invalids in search of health, won't find much of either if they carry their cares with them."

Hazel arose, and with difficulty lifted Harold from the carpet, sat down with him on her knee, and pressed his little face to hers.

"Would my baby like mamma to go away and leave him?" she asked, the tears falling fast on his fair curls. "Oh, I could not leave them behind me!" she added, looking imploringly at Fannie. "I should get no better if you send me there alone; I should ever be yearning for the children."

"Alone? Is your husband nothing?"

"But he will only take me; he will not remain."

"Well, you can't expect his business to go to rack and ruin," snapped Fannie. "How can he stay away from it? With all these heavy expenses upon him, there's more need than ever for his sticking to it closely. And before the

children are gallivanted over the water it might be as well to sit down and calculate the cost."

Poor Hazel, effectually silenced, and her heart breaking with pain, laid her head meekly down upon her children. Sally, who was then in the room, heard a little, and conjectured much of what had passed.

In the evening Mr. Clifton carried Ethel up to the nursery on his shoulders. Sally happened to be there, and thought it a good opportunity to speak.

"Mrs. Clifton wishes to take the children with her to the sea-side, sir."

"Does she?" replied Mr. Clifton.

"And I fear she will make herself very unhappy if they do not go, sir."

"Why should they not go?" asked Mr. Clifton.

He went back to the drawing-room where his wife was alone.

"Hazel, do you wish to take the children with you?"

"Oh, I did wish it so!" she replied, the hectic of hope lighting her pale cheeks. "If they might but go!"

"Of course they may go. It will be a nice change for them, as well as you. Why should you hesitate?"

"The expense," she timidly whispered, the hectic growing deeper.

He looked right into her eyes with his pleasant smile.

"Expense is no concern of yours, Hazel; it is mine. Never let the word expense trouble you until I tell you that it must."

"It will not increase the cost so very much," she returned, her eyes smiling with happiness. "And I shall get well all the sooner for having them with me."

"And to further that, you should take them if it were to the end of the world. Why should you study aught but your own wishes?"

She took his hand in her love and gratitude, for every tone of his voice spoke of care and tenderness for her. All jealous fancies were forgotten, all recollection, in that moment, that his manner was calmer than of yore.

"Harold, I do believe you care as much for me as you used to."

He did not understand the words, but he held her to him as in days gone by, and kissed her tenderly.

“More precious, far more precious to me than of yore, Hazel!”

Miss Clifton flew out when she heard the decision, and frightened her brother to repentance, assuring him that his sending the children was the certain way to preclude all chance of the wife's recovery. Mr. Clifton was sorely puzzled between Hazel's wishes and Hazel's welfare; he would promote both if he could; but if they clashed—? He feared his own judgment, he feared his wife's; and he appealed to medical men. But Fannie had forestalled him there. She had contrived so to impress those gentlemen with the incessant worry the children would prove to Hazel, that they pronounced their veto, and forbade the children's going.

So, after all, Hazel had to resign herself to the disappointment.

“Sally,” said she to her maid, “I shall leave you at home; I must take Cora instead.”

“Oh, my! what have I done?”

“You have done all that you ought, Sally, but you must stay with the children. If I may not take them, the next best thing will be to leave them with you. I shall give them into your charge, not Miss Clifton's,” she said, sinking her voice. “If it were Cora who remained, I could not do that.”

“I will do whatever you think best. I wish I could attend you and stay with them, but of course I can not do both.”

“I am sent away to get my health and strength, but it may be I shall die, Sally. If I never come back, will you promise to remain with my children?”

Sally felt a creeping sensation in her veins; the sobs arose in her throat, but she swallowed them down, and constrained her voice to calmness.

“I hope you will come back to us as well as you used to be. I trust you will, and not give way to low spirits.”

“I sincerely hope and trust I shall,” said Hazel, fervently. “Still, there is no telling, for I am very ill. Promise me, in case of the worst, that you will remain with the children.”

“I will, as long as I am permitted.”

“And be kind to them, and love them, and shield them from—from—any unkindness that may be put upon them,”

she added, her head full of Miss Clifton. "And talk to them sometimes of their poor mother who is gone."

"I will, I will—oh, I will!"

And Sally sat down in a chair as Hazel quitted the room, and burst into tears.

CHAPTER XVII.

MR. CLIFTON and Hazel, with Cora and John in attendance, arrived at the sea-shore, and proceeded at once to the Ocean Hotel. Mr. Clifton thought the journey had done Hazel good, for she looked better, and said she already felt stronger. Mr. Clifton remained with her three days; he had promised only one—but he was pleased with Hazel's returning glimpses of health.

The third morning of his stay at the sea-shore, after swallowing a hasty breakfast, he returned to his wife's room to say farewell.

"Good-bye, my love," he said, stooping to kiss her. "Take care of yourself."

"Give my love to the darlings, Harold, and—and—"

"And what?" he asked. "I have not a moment to lose."

"Do not get making love to Lulu Osborne while I am away."

She spoke in a tone half jesting, half serious. Could he but have seen how her heart was beating! Mr. Clifton took it wholly as a jest, and went away laughing.

Had he believed she was serious he could have been little more surprised had she charged him not to go to China.

Hazel arose later, and lingered over her breakfast, listless enough. She was wondering how she could make the next few weeks pass; what she should do with her time. She had taken two sea-baths since her arrival, but they had appeared not to agree with her, leaving her low and shivering afterward, so it was not deemed advisable that she should attempt more. It was a lovely morning, and she determined to venture on the beach.

She went attended by John, took her seat, and told him to come for her in an hour. She watched the strollers on the beach. She was not long there when there appeared a tall, handsome, gentlemanly man. Her eyes fell upon him; and—what was it that caused every nerve in her frame to

vibrate, every pulse to quicken? Whose form was it that was thus advancing, and changing the monotony of her mind into a tumult? It was that of one whom she soon was to find had never been entirely forgotten.

Captain Redmond St. Clare came slowly on, approaching the part of the beach where she sat. He glanced at her, not with the hardihood displayed by two young men who had just passed, but with quite sufficiently evident admiration.

“What a lovely girl!” thought he to himself. “Why can she be sitting there alone?”

All at once a recollection flashed into his mind; he raised his hat and extended his hand, his fascinating smile in full play.

“I certainly can not be mistaken. Have I not the honor of once more meeting Miss Hazel Barrington?”

She allowed him to take her hand, answering a few words at random, for her wits seemed to have gone wool-gathering.

“I beg your pardon—I should have said Mrs. Harold Clifton. Time has elapsed since we parted, and in the pleasure of seeing you again so unexpectedly I thought of you as you were then.”

She sat down again, the brilliant flush of emotion dying away on her cheeks. It was the loveliest face Redmond St. Clare had seen since last they met, and he thought so as he gazed at her.

“What can have brought you here?” he inquired, taking a seat by her.

“I have been ill,” she explained, “and have been ordered to the sea-side. Mr. Clifton only left me this morning.”

“You do indeed look ill! Is there anything I can do for you?”

She was aware that she looked unusually ill at that moment, for the agitation and the surprise of meeting him were fading away, leaving her face of an ashy whiteness.

She was exceedingly vexed and angry with herself that meeting him should have the power to call forth emotion. Until that moment she was unconscious that she retained any sort of feeling for Captain St. Clare.

“Perhaps I have ventured out too early,” she said, in a tone that would seem to apologize for her looks. “I think

I will return. I shall meet my servant, no doubt. Good-morning, Captain St. Clare."

"But indeed you do not appear fit to walk alone," he remonstrated. "You must allow me to see you safely home."

Drawing her hand within his arm quite as a matter of course, as he had done many a time in days gone by, he proceeded to assist her down the beach.

"Have you seen Mrs. Melborne lately?"

"I saw her this spring when I was in Boston with Mr. Clifton. The first time we have met since my marriage; we do not correspond. Mr. Melborne has paid us some visits at the Barrington estate. They are in the city yet, I believe."

"For all I know. I have not seen them for a long time. I have not cared to be in the city, and for that reason have not seen any of them. My uncle has married again, as I hear."

"I heard that your uncle, the Honorable Gaston St. Clare, had married."

"He is seventy-three—the old simpleton! Of course this materially alters my prospects, for it is just possible he may have a son of his own now; and my creditors all come down on me. They allowed me to run in debt with complacency when I was heir to his estate and money, but as soon as his marriage appeared in the papers myself and my consequence dropped a hundred per cent., credit was stopped, and I was dunned for payment. So I left the city and came down here."

"Leaving your creditors?"

"What else could I do? My uncle would not pay them or increase my allowance."

"What are your prospects then?" resumed Hazel.

"Prospects? Do you see that little ragged boy throwing stones into the water?—it is well the police don't drop upon him. Ask him what his prospects are, and he would stare in your face, and say 'none.' Mine are on a par."

"You may have his money yet."

"I may; but I may not. When these old idiots get a young wife—"

"Have you quarreled with your uncle?" interrupted Hazel.

"I should quarrel with him, as he deserves, if it would

do any good; but I might get my allowance stopped. Self-interest, you see, Hazel, is the order of the day with most of us."

"Do you propose staying at the sea-side long?"

"I don't know. As I may find amusement. The city is a fast place, with its heated rooms and late hours, and I came down for the refreshment of a few sea dips. Am I walking too fast for you?"

"You increased your pace alarmingly when you spoke of your uncle Gaston's marriage. And I am not sorry for it," she added, good-naturedly, "for it has proved to me how strong I am getting. A week ago I could not have walked half so fast."

He interrupted with eager apologies, and soon they reached her hotel. Captain St. Clare entered with her, uninvited. He probably deemed that between old friends great ceremony might be dispensed with, and he sat a quarter of an hour chatting to amuse her. When he arose he inquired what she meant to do with herself in the afternoon.

"To lie down," replied Hazel. "I am not strong enough to sit up all day."

"Should you be going out again afterward you must allow me to take care of you," he observed. "I am glad that I happened to be here, for I am sure you are not fit to wander out only followed by a servant. When Mr. Clifton comes he will thank me for my pains."

What was she to urge in objection? Simply nothing. He spoke, let us not doubt, from a genuine wish to serve her, in a plain, easy tone, as any acquaintance might speak. Hazel schooled herself severely. If those old feelings were not quite dead within her, why, she must smother them down again as effectually as if they were; the very fact of recognizing such to her heart brought its glow of shame to her brow. She would meet Captain St. Clare and suffer his companionship as she would that of the most indifferent stranger.

It was just the wrong way for her to go to work.

As the days passed on Hazel improved wonderfully. She was soon able to go to the sands in the mornings and sit there to enjoy the sea air. She made no acquaintance in the place whatever, and when she had a companion it was Captain St. Clare. He would frequently join her there,

sometimes take her, almost always give her his arm home. She disliked having to take his arm; her conscience whispered it might be better if she did not. One day she said in a joking way—she would not say it in any other—that now she was strong she had no need of his arm or escort. He demanded, in evident astonishment, what had arisen that he might not still offer it, as her husband was not with her to give her his. She had no answer to make to this, no excuse to urge, and in default of one took his arm as usual.

In the evening he was always ready to take her to the beach; but they sat apart, mixing not with the bustling crowd, he lending to his manner as he conversed with her all that it could call up of fascination—and fascination such as Redmond St. Clare's might be dangerous to any ear in the sweet evening twilight. The walk over, he left her at her own door. In the evening she never asked him into her private parlor, and he did not intrude, as he sometimes would of a morning.

Now, where was the help for this? You may say that she should have remained in-doors, and not have to subject herself to his companionship. But the remaining in-doors would not improve her health, and it was health that she was staying at the sea-side to acquire, and the sooner it came the better pleased she would be, for she wanted to be at home with her husband and children.

Two weeks had passed and Mr. Clifton was expected at the sea-side. But what a marvelous change had this two weeks wrought in Hazel! She did not dare to analyze her feelings, but she was conscious that all the fresh emotion of her youth had come again. The blue sky seemed as of sweetest sapphire, the green fields and the waving trees were of emerald brightness, the perfume of the flowers was more fragrant than any perfume had yet seemed. No wonder that she shrunk from self-examination.

The change from listless languor to her pleasant feelings brought the hue and contour of health to her face far sooner than anything else could have done. She went down with Captain St. Clare to meet her husband the evening he came in, and when Mr. Clifton saw her he scarcely knew her. Her features had lost their sharpness, her cheeks wore a rosy flush, and the light of pleasure at meeting him again shone in her eyes.

"What can you have been doing to yourself, my darling?" he uttered in delight as he emerged from the boat and took her hands in his. "You look almost well."

"Yes, I am much better, Harold; but I am warm now and flushed. We have waited here some time, and the setting sun was full upon us. How long the boat was coming in!"

"The wind was dead against us," replied Mr. Clifton, wondering who the exquisite was at his wife's side. He thought he remembered his face.

"Captain St. Clare," said Hazel. "I wrote you word in one of my letters that he was here. Have you forgotten it?"

Yes; it had slipped from his memory.

"And I am pleased that it happened to be so," said that gentleman, interposing, "for it has enabled me to attend Mrs. Clifton in some of her walks. She is stronger now, but at first she was unfit to venture alone."

"I feel much indebted to you," said Mr. Clifton.

Hazel had taken her husband's arm, and Redmond St. Clare walked by the side of Mr. Clifton.

"To tell you the truth," he said, dropping his voice so that it reached only Mr. Clifton's ear, "when I met Hazel I was shocked to see her. I thought her days were numbered, that a very short period must close them. I therefore considered it a bounden duty to render her any slight service that might be in my power."

"I am sure she has been obliged for your attention," responded Mr. Clifton. "And as to her visible improvement, it seems little short of a miracle. I expected from Hazel's letters to me to find her better; but she is more than better, she looks well. Do you hear, Hazel? I say a miracle must have been wrought to bring back your bloom, for two weeks' space of time could scarcely have done it. This must be famous air for invalids."

The bloom that Mr. Clifton spoke of deepened to a glowing crimson as she listened. She knew—and she could not stifle the knowledge, however she might wish to do so—that it was not the place or the sea air which had renovated her heart and her countenance. But she clasped her husband's arm the closer, and inwardly prayed for strength and power to thrust away from her this dangerous foe that was creeping on in guise so insidious.

"You have not said a word to me about the children,"

exclaimed Hazel, as she and her husband entered the hotel, Captain St. Clare not having been invited to enter. "Did they all send me some kisses? Did baby Harold send me any?"

Mr. Clifton laughed. He was not a mother, he was only a father. Baby Harold, with his year of age, send kisses!

"Had you been away, as I am, he should have sent some to you," murmured Hazel. "I would have taken a thousand from him and told him they were for papa."

"I will take a thousand back to him," answered Mr. Clifton, folding his wife to his heart. "My dearest, the sight of you has made me glad."

The following day was Sunday, and Redmond St. Clare was asked to dine with them. After dinner, when Hazel left them, he grew confidential with Mr. Clifton, laying open all his cargo of troubles.

"This compulsory hiding from my creditors is becoming intolerable," he concluded. "Do you see any chance of my escaping them?"

"Not the least," was the candid answer, "unless you can manage to satisfy, or partially satisfy, your creditors. Will not your uncle Gaston assist you?"

"I believe he would were the case fairly represented to him. But how am I to get to do it? I have written several letters to him lately, and for some time I got no reply. Then came an epistle from his wife, not short and sweet, but short and sour. It was to the effect that my uncle was ill, and could not at present be troubled with business."

"He can not be very ill," remarked Mr. Clifton; "he passed through Barrington in his open carriage a week ago."

"He ought to help me," grumbled Captain St. Clare.

"You should contrive to see him."

"I know I should; but it is impossible under the present circumstances."

"Some one might see him for you."

"Some one? Who?"

"Shall I see your uncle Gaston for you?"

"Will you?" returned Captain St. Clare, his dark eyes lighting up.

"If you like. As your friend, you understand, not as your solicitor; that I should decline. I have a slight

knowledge of Gaston St. Clare, and if I can render you any little service I shall be happy to do so in return for your kind attention to my wife. I can not promise to see him for these two or three weeks," resumed Mr. Clifton, "for we are terribly busy; otherwise I should be staying here with my wife."

Captain St. Clare expressed his gratitude, and the prospect, however remote, of being enabled to return to the city increased his spirits to exhilaration. And again thanking Mr. Clifton, he took his departure.

"Harold, I have a favor to ask of you," she timidly began, as they sat together after Captain St. Clare's departure. "You must promise to grant it."

"What is it?"

"But that is not promising."

"I will grant it, Hazel, if it be in my power."

"I want you to remain with me for the rest of the time that I must stay here."

Mr. Clifton looked at her in surprise.

"My dear, how could you think of wishing anything so unlikely? It is impossible."

"Oh! Harold, you must remain."

"I wish I could; but, as I say, it is impossible. You must know it to be so, Hazel. A few weeks later in the year, and I could have stayed the whole of the time with you. As it is, I did not know how to get away for these two or three days."

"And you go back to-morrow?"

"Necessity has no law, my darling."

"Take me with you."

Mr. Clifton smiled.

"No, Hazel, not while I find the change is doing you so much good. I took these rooms for six weeks. You must remain certainly until the end of the term, if not longer."

The color came flowing painfully into her cheeks.

"I can not stay without you!"

"Tell me why?" smiled Mr. Clifton.

Tell him why!

"I am so dull without you," was the best argument she could offer; but her voice faltered, for she felt that it would not be listened to.

Neither was it. Mr. Clifton left the following day, and when he was departing commended his wife to the further

attention of Captain St. Clare. Not the faintest suspicion that it might be unwise to do so crossed his mind. How should it? Perfectly correct and honorable himself, it never occurred to him that Captain St. Clare might be less so; and as to his wife, he would fearlessly have left her alone with him, or with any one else, on a desert island, so entire was his confidence in her.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A WEEK or ten days had passed away since Mr. Clifton's departure, and in Hazel's health there was a further visible improvement. In strength the change was almost beyond belief. She had been walking, for the most part of the morning, up and down the beach, and she sat down to rest before she started for the hotel. Captain St. Clare was her companion, as he usually was in her walks. Shake him off, she could not. She had tried a few stratagems—going out at unusual hours, or choosing unfrequented routes; but he was sure to trace her steps and come upon her. Hazel thought he must watch; probably he did. She would not take more decided steps, or say to him, “You shall not join me.” He might ask an explanation, and Hazel, in her conscious state of feeling, avoided that above all things.

“It will be but for a little time,” she reflected. “I shall soon be gone and leave him, I hope, forever.”

But meanwhile she felt that this prolonged intercourse with him was bringing its fruits, that her cheek flushed at his approach, her heart beat with something too like rapture. She tried to put it down. Why did she not try and stop the breeze as it filled the sails of passing vessels? It would not have been a more hopeless task.

It was a still evening, cool for July, and no sound was heard save the sound of the incoming waves, and Hazel sat in silence with her companion, her rebellious heart beating with a sense of its own happiness. But for the voice of conscience strong within her, but for the sense of right and wrong, but for existing things; in short, but that she was a wife, she might have been content so to sit by his side forever, never to wish to move or to break the silence.

Did he read her feelings?

“Do you remember the evening, Hazel, just such a one

as this, that we all passed at Richmond," he suddenly asked, "your father, Mrs. Melborne, you, I, and others?"

"Yes, I remember it. We had spent a pleasant day; the two Miss Herberts were with us. You drove Mrs. Melborne home, and I went with papa. You drove recklessly, I recollect, and Mrs. Melborne said, when she got home, that you should never drive her again."

"Which meant not till the next time. Of all capricious, vain, exacting women, Mrs. Melborne was the worst. She's a systematic flirt. I drove recklessly on purpose to put her in a fright and pay her off."

"What had she done?"

"Put me in a rage. She had saddled herself upon me when I wanted—I wished for another to be my companion."

"Bertha Herbert?"

"Bertha Herbert!" echoed Captain St. Clare, in a mocking tone. "What did I care for Bertha Herbert?"

Hazel remembered that he had been supposed in those days to care a great deal for Miss Bertha Herbert—a most lovely girl of seventeen.

"Mrs. Melborne used to accuse you of caring too much for her," she said aloud.

"She accused me of caring for some one else more than for Bertha Herbert," he significantly returned, "and for once her jealous surmises were not misplaced. No, Hazel, it was not Bertha Herbert I wished to drive home. Could you not have given a better guess than that at the time?" he added, turning to her.

There was no mistaking the tone of his voice or the glance of his eyes. Hazel felt a crimson flush rising, and she turned her face away.

"The past is gone and can not be recalled," he continued; "but we both played our parts like simpletons. If ever two beings were formed to love each other, you and I were. I sometimes thought you read my feelings."

Surprise had kept her silent, but she interrupted him now haughtily enough.

"I must speak, Hazel, a few words, and then I am silent forever. I would have declared myself had I dared, but my uncertain position, my debts, my inability to keep a wife, weighed me down; and instead of appealing to my uncle Gaston, as I hoped to have done, for the means to

assume a position that would justify me in asking for Mr. William Barrington's daughter, I crushed my hopes within me, and suffered you to escape—”

“I will not hear this, Captain St. Clare!” she cried, rising from her seat in anger.

He touched her arm to place her on it again.

“One single moment yet, I pray you. I have for years wished that you should know why I lost you—a loss that tells upon me yet. I have literally worked out my own folly since. I knew not how passionately I loved you until you became the wife of another. Hazel, I love you passionately still!”

“How dare you presume so to address me?”

She spoke in a cold, dignified tone of *hauteur*, as it was her bounden duty to speak. But, nevertheless, she was conscious of an undercurrent of feeling whispering that under other auspices the avowal would have brought to her the most intense bliss.

“What I have said can do no harm now,” resumed Captain St. Clare; “the time has gone by for it, for neither of us is likely to forget that you are a wife. We have each chosen a path in life, and must abide by it; the gulf between us is impassable; but the fault was mine. I ought to have avowed my affection, and not have suffered you to throw yourself away upon Mr. Clifton.”

“Throw myself away!” she indignantly uttered, roused to the retort. “Mr. Clifton is my dear husband, esteemed, respected, beloved. I married him of my own free choice, and I have never repented it; I have grown more attached to him day by day. Look at his noble nature, his noble form. What are you by his side? You forget yourself, Captain St. Clare!”

He bit his lips.

“No, I do not.”

“You are talking to me as you have no right to talk!” she exclaimed, in her agitation. “Who but you would so insult me, or take advantage of my unprotected condition? Would you dare to do it were Mr. Clifton within reach? I wish you good-evening, sir!”

She walked away as quickly as her tired frame would permit. Captain St. Clare strode after her. He took forcible possession of her hand and placed it within his arm.

"I pray you forgive and forget what has escaped me, Hazel. Suffer me to be as before, the kind friend, the anxious brother, endeavoring to be of service to you in the absence of Mr. Clifton."

"It is what I have suffered you to be, looking upon you as, I may say, a relative," she coldly rejoined, withdrawing her hand from his contact. "Not else should I have permitted your incessant companionship; and this is how you have repaid it. My husband thanked you for your attention to me. Could he have read what was in your false heart, he would have offered you a different sort of thanks, I fancy."

"I ask you for pardon, Hazel. I have acknowledged my fault, and I can do no more. I will not so offend again; but there are moments when our dearest feelings break through the rules of life and betray themselves, in spite of our sober judgment. Suffer me to support you down these steep steps," he added. "You are not strong enough to proceed alone after this evening's long walk."

"You should have thought of that before," she said, some sarcasm in her tone. "No; I have declined."

So he put his arm back, which he was holding out, and she walked on unsupported, with what strength she had, he continuing to walk by her side. Arrived at her hotel, she wished him a cold good-evening, and he turned away in the direction of his hotel.

"Cora, tell John to be in readiness to take a letter to the office, and he must walk fast, so that it will go out in the last mail."

The symptoms of sinful happiness throbbing at her heart while Redmond St. Clare told her of his love spoke plainly to Hazel of the expediency of withdrawing entirely from his society and his dangerous sophistries. She would, she vowed, be away from the very place that contained him—put miles between them. So she dashed off a letter to her husband, an urgent summons that he should come for her without delay; for remain longer she would not. It is probable she would have started alone, not waiting for Mr. Clifton, but for fear of not having sufficient funds for the journey after the hotel bill and other things were paid.

Mr. Clifton, when he received the letter and marked its earnest tone, wondered much. In reply he stated he would be with her on the following Saturday, and then her re-

turning or not with him would be settled. Fully determined not to meet Captain St. Clare in the intervening days, Hazel only went out in a carriage. He called once and was shown into the parlor, but Hazel, who happened to be in her room, sent out a message which was delivered by John.

"Mrs. Clifton's compliments, but she must decline receiving visitors."

Sunday morning—it had been impossible for him to get away before—brought Mr. Clifton. He strongly combated her wish to return home until the six weeks should have expired; he nearly said he would not take her, and she grew earnest over it, almost to agitation.

"Hazel," he said, "let me know your motive, for it appears to me that you have one. The sojourn here is evidently doing you a vast deal of good, and what you urge about 'being dull' sounds very like nonsense. Tell me what it is?"

A sudden impulse flashed over her that she would tell him the truth. Not tell him that she loved Captain St. Clare, or that he had spoken to her as he did; she valued her husband too greatly to draw him into any unpleasantness whose end could not be seen; but own to him that she once had a passing fancy for Redmond St. Clare, and preferred not to be subjected to his companionship now. Oh! that she had done so—her kind, her noble, her judicious husband! Why did she not? The whole truth as to her present feelings it was not expedient that she should tell; but she might have confided to him quite sufficient. He would only have cherished her the more deeply, and sheltered her under his fostering care, safe from harm.

Why did she not? On the impulse of the moment she was about to do so, when Mr. Clifton, who had been taking a letter from his pocket-book, put it into her hand. Upon what slight threads do the events of life turn! Her thoughts diverted, she remained silent while she opened the letter. It was from Fannie, who had handed it to her brother in the moment of his departure, to carry to Hazel and save postage. A letter as stiff as Fannie herself. The children were well, and the doings of the house were going on well, and she hoped Hazel was better. It filled three sides of note-paper, but that was all the news it contained, and it wound up with the following sentence:

"I would continue my epistle, but Lulu Osborne, who is to spend the day with us, has just arrived."

Lulu Osborne spending the day at the Barrington estate! That item was quite enough for Hazel, and her heart and her confidence closed to her husband.

She must go home to her children, she urged; she could not remain longer away from them, and she urged it at length with tears.

"Hazel," said Mr. Clifton, "if you are so much in earnest as this, you shall certainly go back with me."

Then she was like a child let loose from school. She laughed, she danced in her excess of content, she showered kisses on her husband, thanking him in her gleeful gratitude. Mr. Clifton set it down to her love for him; he arrived at the conclusion that in reiterating that she could not bear to be away from him she spoke the truth.

"Hazel," he said, smiling tenderly upon her, "do you remember, in the first days of our marriage, you told me you did not love me, but that the love would come? I think it has."

Her face flushed nearly to tears at the word—a bright, glowing, all too conscious flush. Mr. Clifton mistook its source, and caught her to his heart.

One day more, and then they—she and that man—should be separated by miles! The thought caused her to lift up her heart in thankfulness. She knew that to leave him would be as though she had left the sun behind her; that the other side might for a time be somewhat dreary; nevertheless, she fervently thanked Heaven. Oh, reader! never doubt the principles of poor Hazel, her reticence of mind, her wish and endeavor to do right, her abhorrence of wrong. Her spirit was earnest and true, her intentions were pure.

Captain St. Clare paid a visit to Mr. Clifton, and inquired if he had had time to see his uncle Gaston. Not yet. Mr. Clifton had been too busy to think of it, but he should soon have more leisure on his hands, and would not fail him. Such was the reply—the reply of an honorable man to a man of dishonor; but of the dishonor Mr. Clifton suspected nothing.

Mr. Clifton, wife, and servants went on board the boat in the afternoon in good time, and Captain St. Clare greeted them and said farewell as they stepped on the

steamer. Hazel took her seat on the deck, her husband standing by her; the ropes were unloosened, and the boat moved slowly down the harbor. On the shore stood Redmond St. Clare, watching its progress, watching her. He was a bold, unscrupulous man, and there was little doubt that the more refined feelings, both of the past and present, he had thought fit to avow for Hazel were to serve a purpose. However, he had received his checkmate.

As he receded from Hazel's view a sensation of relief thrilling through her whole frame caused it to shudder, and involuntarily she clasped the hand of Mr. Clifton.

"You are not cold, Hazel?" he said, bending over her.

"Oh, no; I am very comfortable—very happy!"

"But you were surely shivering?"

"At the thought of what I could have done with myself had you come away and left me there still, all alone, Harold," she continued, in an impassioned whisper. "Never let me go from you again. Keep me by you always."

He smiled as he looked down into her pleading eyes, and a whole world of tender response and love might be detected in his earnest tone.

"Always and always, Hazel. It is greater pain to me than to you to have you away from me."

How could she ever doubt him?

CHAPTER XIX.

MR. CLIFTON mounted his horse one morning and rode over to see Mr. Gaston St. Clare. He asked for that gentleman, but was shown into the presence of Mrs. St. Clare, a young and pretty woman dressed showily. She inquired his business.

"My business, madame, is with Mr. St. Clare."

"But Mr. St. Clare is not well enough to attend to business. It upsets him, worries him."

"Nevertheless, I am here by his own appointment. Twelve o'clock, he mentioned."

Mrs. St. Clare bit her lip and bowed coldly, and at that moment a servant appeared to conduct Mr. Clifton to Mr. St. Clare's room. The matter which had taken Mr. Clifton thither was entered upon immediately—Redmond St. Clare, his debts, and his gracelessness. Mr. St. Clare, an

old gentleman in a velvet skull-cap, particularly enlarged upon the latter.

"I would pay his debts to-day and set him upon his feet again, but that I know I should have to do the same thing over and over again to the end—as I have done before. He is a worthless fellow, and nothing else."

"His tale drew forth my compassion, and I promised I would see you and speak for him," returned Mr. Clifton. "Of Captain St. Clare's personal virtues or vices I know nothing."

"And the less you know, the better," growled Mr. St. Clare. "I suppose he wants me to clear him and start him afresh?"

"Something of that sort, I conclude."

"But how is it to be done? His affairs are in a state of confusion, and nobody can get to the bottom of them without an explanation from him. Some liabilities for which I have furnished the money, the creditors swear, have not yet been liquidated. He must come to Barrington if he wants anything done."

"Where is he to come to stay when he is here?"

"He can't stay here," hastily rejoined Mr. St. Clare.

"My wife would not have him for a day."

"He might be at the Barrington estate," good-naturedly observed Mr. Clifton. "Nobody would think of looking for him there. I think it is a pity that you should not meet, if you do feel inclined to help him."

"You are a great deal more considerate to him than he deserves, Mr. Clifton. May I ask if you intend to act for him in a professional capacity?"

"No, I do not."

A few words, and it was decided that Captain St. Clare should be immediately sent for. As Mr. Clifton left Mr. St. Clare's presence, he encountered Mrs. St. Clare.

"I can scarcely be ignorant that your conference with my husband has reference to his nephew," she observed.

"It has," replied Mr. Clifton.

"I have a very bad opinion of him, Mr. Clifton; at the same time, I do not wish you to carry away a wrong impression of me. Redmond St. Clare is my husband's nephew; it may therefore appear strange that I set my face so determinedly against him. Two or three years ago, previous to my marriage with Mr. St. Clare, in fact,

before I knew my husband, I was brought into contact with Redmond St. Clare. He was acquainted with some friends of mine, and at their house I met him. He behaved shamefully; he repaid their hospitality with gross ingratitude. Other details and facts regarding his conduct also became known to me. Altogether, I believe him to be a base and despicable man, both by nature and by inclination, and that he will remain such to the end."

"I know very little indeed of him," observed Mr. Clifton. "May I inquire the nature of his ill conduct in the instance you mention?"

"He ruined them—he ruined them, Mr. Clifton. They were simple, unsuspecting country people, understanding neither fraud nor vice, nor the ways of an evil world. Redmond St. Clare got them to put their names to bills, 'as a simple matter of form, to accommodate him for a month or so,' he stated, and so they believed. They were not wealthy; they lived upon their own small estate in comfort, but with no superfluous money to share, and when the time came for them to pay—as come it did—it brought ruin, and they had to leave their home. He deliberately did it. I am certain that Redmond St. Clare deliberately did it, knowing what would be the end. And I could tell you of other things. My husband may have informed you that I object to receive him here. I do. My objection is to the man, to his character; not owing, as I hear it has been said, to any jealous, paltry feeling touching his being heir. I must lose my own self-respect before I admit Redmond St. Clare to my house as an inmate. My husband may assist him, may pay his debts and get him out of his scrapes as often as he pleases, but I will not have him here!"

"Mr. St. Clare said you declined to receive him. But it is necessary he should come here if his affairs are to be set straight, and also that he should see Mr. St. Clare."

"Come here?" interrupted Mrs. St. Clare. "How can he come under the present circumstances?"

"There is no other way. I have offered to let him stay at the Barrington estate," replied Mr. Clifton.

"Take care that he does not repay your hospitality with ingratitude," warmly returned Mrs. St. Clare. "It would only be in accordance with his practice."

Mr. Clifton laughed.

"I do not well see what harm he could do me, allowing that he had the inclination. He would not scare my clients from me, nor beat my children, and I can take care of my pocket. A few days, no doubt, will be the extent of his stay."

Mrs. St. Clare smiled too, and shook hands with Mr. Clifton.

"In your house perhaps there may be no field for his vagaries, but rely upon it, where there is one he is sure to be at some mischief."

The visit of Mr. Clifton to Mr. St. Clare took place on Friday morning, and on his return to his office he dispatched an account of it to Captain St. Clare, telling him to come at once. But Mr. Clifton, like many another man whose brain has its share of work, was sometimes forgetful of trifles, and it entirely slipped his memory to mention the expected arrival at home. The following evening, Saturday, he and Hazel were dining in the neighborhood, when the conversation at the table was upon one of their neighbors and his embarrassments, and it immediately occurred to him that he had not told his wife of Captain St. Clare's anticipated visit. He kept it in his mind and spoke as soon as they were in the carriage returning home.

"Hazel," he began, "I suppose we have always rooms ready for visitors, because I am expecting one?"

"Oh, yes. Or, if not, they are soon made ready."

"Ay, but to-morrow is Sunday, and I have no doubt that it is the day he will take advantage to come. I am sorry I forgot to mention it yesterday."

"Who is coming?"

"Captain St. Clare."

"Who?" repeated Hazel, in a sharp tone of consternation.

"Captain St. Clare. His uncle consents to see him, with a view to the settlement of his liabilities, but Mrs. St. Clare declines to receive him at their house. So I offered to give him house-room at the Barrington estate for a few days."

Hazel's heart leaped. She grew dizzy at the words; her senses seemed for the moment to desert her; her first sensation was as if the earth had opened; her second was a lively consciousness that Captain St. Clare ought not to be suffered to come again into companionship with her.

Mr. Clifton continued to converse of the man's embarrassments, of his own interview with Mr. St. Clare, of Mrs. St. Clare. But Hazel was as one who heard not. She was debating the question, how could she prevent his coming?

"Harold," she said, presently, "I do not wish Captain St. Clare to stay at the Barrington estate."

"It will only be for a few days; perhaps for a day or two."

"That may be," interrupted Hazel, in an accent of impatience; "but why should he come to our house?"

"I proposed it myself. I had no idea you would dislike his coming. Why should you?"

"I don't like Redmond St. Clare," she said. "That is, I don't care to have him at the Barrington estate."

"My dear, I feel there is no help for it now; he is most likely on his road, and will arrive to-morrow; I can not turn him out again, after my own voluntary invitation. Had I known it would be disagreeable to you, I should not have proposed it. Being Sunday, a free day, he will be sure to take advantage of it. What has he done that you should object to his coming?"

"He has done nothing," was her faltering answer, feeling that her grounds of opposition must melt under one by one.

"At any rate, his ill doings or well doings can not affect us for the short period he is likely to remain. You have taken a prejudice against him also, I suppose, Hazel."

She suffered Mr. Clifton to remain in this belief, and sat with clasped hands and a despairing heart, feeling that fate was against her. How could she accomplish her task of forgetting this man if he was thus to be thrown into her home and her companionship? Suddenly she turned to her husband and laid her cheek upon his shoulder.

He thought she was tired. He passed his arm around her waist, drew her face to a more comfortable position, and bent his own lovingly upon it. It came into her mind, as she lay there, to tell him a portion of the truth, as it had done once before. It was a strong arm of shelter around her, a powerful pillar of protection—he upon whom she leaned. Why did she not confide herself to him as trustingly as a little child? Simply because her courage failed her. Once, twice, the opening words were upon her lips, but come forth they did not; and then the carriage stopped at

the Barrington estate, and the opportunity was over. Oh, how many a time in after years did Hazel recall that midnight drive with her husband, and wish in vain that she had opened his eyes to that dangerous man!

The following morning proved a wet one, but it cleared up in the middle of the day. In the afternoon, however, while they were in church, the rain came on again.

On their return home Mr. Clifton had driven in at the gates and was winding up the avenue, when sounds of distress were heard, and they saw little Ethel flying toward them from the slopes, crying and sobbing in greatest agitation. Mr. Clifton jumped out and met the child.

"Oh, papa, papa!—oh, come, pray come! I think she is dead."

He took the child in his arms to soothe her.

"Hush, my little darling; you alarm your mamma! Don't tremble so. Tell me what it is."

Ethel told her tale. She had been a naughty child, she freely confessed, and had run out in the rain for fun because Sally told her not to; she had run in the wet grass of the park, down the slopes, Sally after her. And Sally had slipped and was lying at the foot of the slope with white face, never moving.

"Take care of her, Hazel," said Mr. Clifton, placing the agitated and repentant child by his wife's side. "She says Sally has fallen down the slopes. No, do not come; I will go first and see what it is."

Sally was lying just as she fell, at the foot of the slope. But her eyes were open now, and if she had fainted—as might have been inferred from the little girl's words—she had recovered consciousness.

"Oh, Mr. Clifton, don't try to move me! I fear my leg is broken."

He did, however, essay gently to raise her, but she screamed with pain, and he found he must wait for assistance.

"I trust you are not much hurt," he kindly said.

"How did it happen?"

"Miss Ethel ran out, sir, in all the rain and wet, and I went after her to bring her back again. But the slope is slippery and down I went, and just at first I remembered nothing more."

Mr. Clifton dispatched John for the doctor, and with

the aid of the servants, who were soon from church, Sally was carried in and laid on a bed. Mr. Clifton and Hazel remained with her. Miss Clifton also was there, fidgeting and banging about getting things ready that she fancied might be wanted, and pressing cordials upon Sally which the latter could not take. Miss Clifton's frame of mind, between sympathy and anger, was rather an explosive one; altogether she did more harm than good. Little Ethel stole in, and drew her mother away from the bed.

"Mamma," she whispered, "there is a strange gentleman down-stairs. He came in a carriage. He has got a gripsack, and he is asking for you and papa."

Hazel turned sick with apprehension. Was he really come?

"Who is it, Ethel?" she said by way of making some answer. She guessed but too well.

"I don't know. I don't like him, mamma. He laid hold of me and held me tight, and there was an ugly look in his eyes."

"Go round the bed and tell your papa that a stranger is down-stairs," said Hazel.

"Mamma," shivered the child, before she stirred to obey, "will Sally die?"

"No, dear; I hope not."

"Because you know it will be my fault. Oh, mamma, I am so sorry! What can I do?"

"Hush! If you sob it will make Sally worse. Go and whisper to papa about the gentleman."

"But will Sally ever forgive me?"

"She has forgiven you already, I am sure, Ethel; but you must be all the more obedient to her for the future. Go to papa, my dear, as I tell you."

The stranger was of course Captain St. Clare. Mr. Clifton went down to receive and entertain him. Hazel did not, the accident to her maid being put forth as an excuse.

The doctor pronounced the injury to be a fracture of the ankle-bone. It might have been much worse, he observed; but Sally would be confined to her bed for three or four weeks.

"Sally," whispered Ethel, "I'll come and read my beautiful book of fairy tales, with the pictures; you will like

to hear them. There's one about a princess who was locked up in a castle with nothing to eat."

Sally faintly smiled and took the child's eager hand in hers. Later in the evening, Ethel and Frank were in the room with Mr. Clifton.

"These are fine children," observed Redmond St. Clare. "Beautiful faces!"

"They resemble their mother much, I think," was the reply of Mr. Clifton.

"Young lady, I must take possession of you," said Captain St. Clare, extending his hand and pulling Ethel toward him. "You ran away from me when I first came, and would not tell me what your name was."

"I ran away to tell mamma that you had come; she was with Sally."

"Sally! Who is Sally?"

"Hazel's maid," interposed Mr. Clifton. "The one to whom, as I told you, the accident had just happened. A particularly valued servant in our family."

At this moment, Ethel, having been trying in vain to escape from Captain St. Clare, burst into tears.

"Oh, papa, I don't like him to hold me!" ignoring all ceremony.

Captain St. Clare laughed, and held her tighter. But Mr. Clifton arose, and with quiet authority drew away the child, and placed her on his own knee. She hid her face upon his breast, and put up her little hands around his neck.

"Papa, I don't like him," she whispered, softly. "I am afraid of him. Don't let him take me again."

Mr. Clifton's only answer was to press her to him.

"You are not accustomed to children, Captain St. Clare," he observed. "They are curious little sensitive plants."

"They must be a great worry," was the rejoinder. "This accident to your servant must be a serious one. It will confine her to her bed for some time?"

"Four weeks, the doctor says. And no possibility of her getting up from it."

Captain St. Clare arose and caught hold of Frank in apparent glee, and swung him around. The boy laughed, unlike his sister, and seemed to enjoy the fun.

CHAPTER XX.

THE next day broke bright, warm, and cloudless, and the morning sun streamed into Mrs. Osborne's room. She had not risen yet. The judge had gone down to breakfast and reported the fact that Mrs. Osborne was ill and would not be down. A minute or two, and up ran Lulu, looking bright and fair as the morning, her pink muslin dress with its ribbons and its open white lace sleeves as pretty as she was. She leaned over to kiss her mother.

"Mamma, are you ill? And you have been so well lately; you went to bed so well last night! Papa says—"

"Lulu dear," interrupted Mrs. Osborne, glancing round the room with dread, and speaking in a deep whisper, "I have had one of those dreadful dreams again."

"And it is so long since you had one of those disagreeable dreams! Why, how long is it, mamma?"

"So long, Lulu, that the dread of them had nearly left me. I scarcely think I have had one since that stolen visit of Tom's years ago."

"Was it a very bad dream, mamma?"

"Oh, child, yes. I dreamed that the real murderer came to Barrington! that he was with us here, and we—"

At this moment the door was flung open and the face of the judge, especially stern and cross then, was put in. So startled was Mrs. Osborne that she trembled till she shook the pillow, and Lulu sprung away from the bed. Surely he had not distinguished their topic of conversation!

"Are you coming to breakfast to-day or not, Lulu? Do you expect me to take my breakfast alone?"

"She is coming this instant, Thomas," said Mrs. Osborne, her voice more faint than usual. And the judge turned and stamped down the stairs again.

"Lulu, could your papa have heard me mention Tom?"

"No, no, mamma—impossible; the door was shut. I will bring up your breakfast myself, and then you can tell me about the dream."

Lulu flew after Mr. Osborne and poured out his coffee. After breakfast was over, and the judge had left the house, Lulu returned upstairs with her mamma's breakfast of coffee and toast.

"Did you dream of Tom, mamma?" asked Lulu, when Mrs. Osborne had finished her breakfast.

"Not very much of Tom, except that old and continuous trouble of his being away and unable to return seemed to pervade it all through. You remember, Lulu, Tom asserted to us that night when he came here that he did not commit the murder; that it was another who did."

"Yes, I remember it," replied Lulu.

"Lulu, I am convinced he spoke the truth; I trust him implicitly."

"I feel sure of it also, mamma."

"I asked him, you remember, whether it was Gurdy Hood who committed it, for I have always doubted Hood in an indefinite, vague manner. Tom replied that it was not Hood, but a stranger. Well, Lulu, in my dream I thought that stranger came to Barrington; that he came to this house, here, and we were talking to him of it, conversing as we might with any other visitor. Mind you, we seemed to know that he was the one who actually did it; but he denied it; he wanted to put it upon Tom, and I saw him—yes I did, Lulu—whisper to Gurdy Hood. But, oh! I can not tell you the sickening horror that was upon me throughout, and seemed to be upon you also, lest he should make good his own apparent innocence and crush Tom, his victim. I think the dread and horror awoke me."

"What was this stranger like?" asked Lulu.

"Well, I can not quite tell you; the recollection of his appearance seemed to pass away from me with the dream. He was dressed as a gentleman, and we conversed with him as an equal."

Lulu's mind was full of Captain Tilford, but his name had not been mentioned to Mrs. Osborne, neither would she mention it now. She fell into deep thought, and Mrs. Osborne had to speak twice before she could be aroused.

"Lulu, I say, don't you think that this dream, coming uncalled for, uninduced, must forbode some ill? Rely upon it, something connected with that wretched murder is going to be stirred up again."

"I wish you could remember what the man was like in your dream."

"I wish I could," answered Mrs. Osborne; "all I remember is that he appeared to be a gentleman."

"Was he tall? Had he black hair?"

Mrs. Osborne shook her head.

"I tell you, my dear, the remembrance has passed from me; so whether his hair was black or light I can not say. I think he was tall; but he was sitting, and Gurdy Hood stood behind his chair. I seemed to feel that Tom was outside the door, in hiding, trembling lest the man should go out and see him there; and I trembled too. Oh, Lulu, it was a distressing dream!"

"I wish you could avoid having them, mamma, for they seem to upset you very much."

"Why did you ask me whether the man had black hair?"

Lulu returned an evasive answer. It would not do to tell her mother that her suspicions pointed to one particular quarter; it would have agitated her too much.

"So vivid was the dream, so matter-of-fact and like reality, that even when I awoke I could not for some minutes believe but the murderer was actually at Barrington," resumed Mrs. Osborne. "The impression that he is here, or is coming here, is upon me yet; a sort of undercurrent of impression, you understand, Lulu. Of course my own good sense tells me that it is no real foundation for supposing such to be the case. Oh, Lulu, Lulu!" she added, in a tone of wailing, as she let her head droop forward in its pain till it rested on her daughter's arm, "when will this unhappy state of things end? One year glides away and another comes; year after year they drag on, and I can not see my poor boy!"

Lulu spoke not. What sympathy or comfort could she offer in words? The case admitted of none; but she pressed her lips upon her mother's pale forehead.

"Child, I am getting sick—sick to hear of poor Tom. My heart aches for the sight of him," went on the poor lady. "Seven years next spring it will be since he stole here to see us. Seven years and not a look at his beloved face, not a word of news from him to say that he is yet alive! Was any mother ever tried as I am tried?"

"Dear mamma, don't; you will make yourself ill."

"I am ill already, Lulu."

"Yes, but this grief and emotion will render you worse. People say that the seventh year always brings a change; it may bring one as regards Tom. It may bring him home to us free. Do not despair."

"Child, I do not despair. Despondency I can not help

at times feeling, but it has not reached despair. I believe, I truly believe that the one who did the deed will be found out."

With the arrival of Captain St. Clare at the Barrington estate all the jealous feeling touching her husband and Lulu Osborne was renewed, and with greater force than ever. Lulu, painfully anxious that something should be brought to light by which her brother should be exonerated from the terrible charge under which he lay, fully believing that Captain Tilford was the man who had committed the crime, as asserted by Tom, was in a state of excitement bordering on frenzy. The evening following the dream Lulu was taking a walk, and when she arrived on the path nearest the road she saw Gurdy Hood coming toward her. Gurdy, who by nature was not famed for his politeness, was blunt of manner and "fast" by habit.

"Say, Lu, are you good for a few picnics?"

"Good for a great many," returned Lulu.

"Our girls want to get some up in the next week or two. Jack is at home, you know."

"Is he?" said Lulu, in surprise.

"We had the letter yesterday, and he came to-day, a friend with him. So mind you, keep yourself in readiness for any fun that may turn up. Good-evening."

As Lulu was returning his salutation she became conscious of other footsteps advancing from the same direction whence he had come, and turning her head hastily around, saw two gentlemen walking arm in arm close upon her, in one of whom she recognized "Jack," otherwise Mr. John Hood. He stopped and held out his hand.

"It is some years since we met, but I have not forgotten the pretty face of Lulu Osborne," he said. "A young girl's face it was then, but it is a stately young lady's face now."

Lulu laughed.

"Your brother told me you had arrived at Barrington; but I did not know you were so close to me. He has been asking me if I am ready for some pic—"

Lulu's voice faltered, and the rushing crimson dyed her face. Whose face was that, who was he standing opposite her?

Mr. Hood may have deemed that Lulu, who was not at-

tending to him, but to his companion, wished for an introduction, and he accordingly made it.

“Captain Tilford—Miss Osborne.”

Then Lulu roused herself. Her senses were partially coming to her, and she became aware of the fact that they must deem her behavior unorthodox for a young lady.

“I—I—looked at Captain Tilford, for I thought I remembered his face,” she stammered.

“I was in Barrington for a day or two some five years ago,” he observed.

“Ah—yes,” returned Lulu. “Are you going to make a long stay now?”

“I think several weeks; I can not say for certain.”

Lulu parted from them, thought upon thought rushing upon her brain. What should she do? Her first thoughts were to tell Mr. Clifton as soon as possible. She knew her mother would not miss her for the next hour, and her father would not be home until midnight. With this thought she did not stop to consider anything but that she wanted Mr. Clifton to know Captain Tilford was in Barrington; so away she flew over the fields to the Barrington estate. She ran up the steps and rang the bell in such haste that she soon brought John and Mr. Clifton to the door. Mr. Clifton in his surprise at seeing Lulu there, and so excited, took her hand to try to draw her within, but she earnestly declined, and asked him if he would come out, as she wanted to see him. Certainly he would, if she would not come in. What had he to conceal? Why should he not? Hazel and Captain St. Clare arrived in the hall just in time to see who was there, and as they left the steps went to one of the hall windows and watched them walk away in the moonlight. Never since their marriage had Hazel's jealousy been excited as it was then.

“I—I feel—I scarcely know whether I am awake or dreaming,” began Lulu, putting up her hands to her brow, and speaking in a dreamy tone. “Pardon me for bringing you out in this unceremonious fashion.”

“What state secrets have you to disclose?” asked Mr. Clifton, in a jesting manner.

“Mamma had one of her dreams last night, and she told me this morning the impression it left upon her mind—that the murderer was at Barrington—was so vivid that, in

spite of common sense, she could not persuade herself that he was not. Well just now—”

“Lulu, what can be the matter?” said Mr. Clifton, perceiving that her agitation was so great as to impede her words.

“I have just seen him,” she rejoined.

“Seen him!” echoed Mr. Clifton, looking at her fixedly, a doubt crossing his mind whether Lulu’s mind might be as uncollected as her manner.

“Yes, I have just been introduced to Captain Tilford. He is here for a few weeks’ stay with John Hood. Do you wonder that I know not whether I am awake or dreaming?”

“It is a singular coincidence!” exclaimed Mr. Clifton.

“What must be our course in regard to Tilford?”

“It is more than I can tell you,” replied Mr. Clifton.

“I can not go up to the man and unceremoniously accuse him of being Truesdell’s murderer. In the first place, Lulu, we are not positively sure that he is the man spoken of by Tom.”

“Oh, Harold! how can you doubt it? The extraordinary fact of his appearing here at this moment, coupled with mamma’s dream, might assure you of it.”

“Not quite,” smiled Mr. Clifton. “All we can do is to go cautiously to work and endeavor to ascertain whether he is the same.”

“And there is no way for you to do it!” wailed Lulu.

Mr. Clifton did not leave Lulu until he saw her safe in her own house.

CHAPTER XXI.

BUT now look at the mean treachery of Captain St. Clare! The few meetings that Hazel witnessed between her husband and Lulu would have been quite enough to excite her anger and jealousy, and to trouble her peace; but, in addition, Captain St. Clare took care to tell her of those she did not see. It pleased him—he could best tell his own motive—to watch the movements of Mr. Clifton and Lulu.

There was a hedge pathway through the fields on the opposite side of the road to the residence of Judge Osborne, and as Mr. Clifton walked down the road to business, in

his unconcern, Captain St. Clare would stroll down like a serpent behind the hedge, watching all his movements, watching his interviews with Lulu, if any took place, watching Mr. Clifton turn into Judge Osborne's, as he sometimes did, and perhaps watch Lulu run out of the house to meet him. It was all retailed with miserable exaggeration to Hazel, whose jealousy naturally grew feverish in its extent. It is scarcely necessary to explain that of Hazel's jealousy Lulu knew nothing; not a shadow of suspicion had ever penetrated to her mind that Hazel was jealous of her.

Had she been told that such was the fact, she would have laughed in derision at her informant. Mr. Clifton's happy wife, proudly secured in her position and his affection, jealous of her! Of her, to whom he never gave an admiring look or a loving word! It would have taken a good deal to make Lulu believe that.

How different were the facts in reality. These meetings of Mr. Clifton and Lulu, instead of being episodes of love-making and tender speeches, were positively painful to Lulu from the unhappy nature of the subject discussed. Far from feeling a reprehensible pleasure in seeking the meetings with Mr. Clifton, Lulu shrunk from them; but that she was urged by dire necessity, in the interests of Tom, she would wholly have avoided them. Poor Lulu! in spite of that explosion of feeling years back, was a lady, possessed of a lady's ideas and feelings; and, remembering that explosion, it did not at all accord with her meetings with Harold Clifton. But Lulu, in her love for her brother, pressed down all thought of self and went perseveringly forward for Tom's sake.

Mr. Clifton was sitting one morning in his private room at his office, when Mr. Faber came in.

"A gentleman is asking to see you, Mr. Clifton."

"I am too busy to see anybody for this hour to come. You know that, Faber."

"So I told him, sir, and he says he will wait. It is Captain Tilford, who is staying with John Hood."

Mr. Clifton raised his eyes, and they encountered those of the old man. A peculiar expression was in the face of both. Mr. Clifton glanced down at the paper he was perusing, as if calculating his time. Then he looked up again, and said:

“I will see him, Faber. Send him in.”

The business leading to his visit was quite simple. Captain Tilford had got himself into trouble about “a bill,” as too many other captains do, on occasions, and he had come to get advice from Mr. Clifton.

Mr. Clifton felt dubious as to giving it. This Captain Tilford was a pleasant man who won much on acquaintance—one whom Mr. Clifton would have been pleased, from a friendly point of view and setting professional interests apart, to help out of his difficulties; but if he were the villain they suspected him to be, the man with crime upon his hands, then Mr. Clifton would have ordered him out at short notice.

“Can not you advise me what my course ought to be?” he inquired, detecting Mr. Clifton’s hesitation.

“I could advise you, certainly; but—you must excuse my being plain, Captain Tilford—I like to know who my clients are before I take up their cause or accept them as clients.”

“I am able to pay you,” was Captain Tilford’s reply.

“I am not short of ready money, only this bill.”

Mr. Clifton laughed out.

“It was a natural inference of yours,” he said; “but I assure you I was not thinking of your purse. My father held it right never to undertake business for a stranger. Unless a man was good and his cause was good, he did not entertain it; and I have acted on the same principle. By these means, the position and character of our business is such as is rarely attained by solicitors. Now, in saying that you are a stranger to me I am not casting any doubt upon you, Captain Tilford. I am merely upholding my common practice.”

“My family is well connected,” was Captain Tilford’s next venture.

“Excuse me; family has nothing to do with it. If the poorest day-laborer, if a pauper out of the poor-house came to me for advice, he should be heartily welcome to it, providing he were an honest man. Again I repeat, you must take no offense at what I say, for I cast no reflection on you. I only urge that you and your character are unknown to me.”

Curious words from a lawyer to a client, and Captain Tilford found them so. But Mr. Clifton’s tone was so

courteous, his manner so affable, in fact, he was so thoroughly the gentleman that it was impossible to feel hurt.

"Well, how can I convince you that I am respectable? Inquire of John Hood. The Hoods, too, are friends of yours, and they have not disdained to make me welcome in their family."

"True," returned Mr. Clifton, feeling that he could not well object further, and also that all men should be deemed innocent until proved guilty. "At any rate, I will advise you what must be done at present," he added, "though if the affair must go on, I do not promise that I can continue to act for you; I am very busy just now."

Captain Tilford explained his dilemma, and Mr. Clifton told him what to do in it.

"Were you not at Barrington some ten years ago?" he suddenly inquired at the close of the conversation. "You denied it to me once at my house; but I concluded, from an observation you let fall that you had been here."

"Yes, I was," replied Captain Tilford, in a confidential tone. "I don't mind owning it to you in confidence; but I do not wish it to get abroad. The fact is, that when I was a careless young fellow I was stopping a few miles from here, and got into a scrape through a—a—in short, it was an affair of gallantry. I did not show out very well at the time, and I don't care that it should be known I am in the country again."

Mr. Clifton's pulses—for Tom Osborne's sake—beat a shade quicker. The avowal, "an affair of gallantry," was almost a confirmation of his suspicions.

"Yes," he pointedly said; "the girl was Kate Truesdell."

"Kate—who?" repeated Captain Tilford, opening his eyes and fixing them on Mr. Clifton's.

"Kate Truesdell."

Captain Tilford continued to look at Mr. Clifton, an amused expression, rather than any other, predominant on his features.

"You are mistaken," he observed. "Kate Truesdell? I never heard the name before in my life."

"Did you never hear or know that a dreadful tragedy was enacted in this place about that time?" returned Mr. Clifton, in a low, meaning tone. "That Kate Truesdell's father—"

“Oh, yes, yes, yes!” hastily interrupted Captain Tilford. “I am telling a story in saying I never heard the name. Kate Truesdell? Why, that’s the girl John Hood was telling me about. Who—what was it?—disappeared after her father was murdered—”

“Murdered in his own cottage, almost in Kate’s presence; murdered by—by—” Mr. Clifton recollected himself; he had spoken more impulsively than was his custom. “Truesdell was my father’s faithful clerk for many years,” he more calmly concluded.

“And he who committed the murder was young Osborne, son of Judge Osborne, and brother to that attractive girl, Lulu. Your speaking of this has recalled what they told me to my recollection. The first evening I was at the Hoods’, Judge Osborne and a half dozen others were smoking. I also saw Miss Osborne that evening at your park gate, and John told me of the murder. An awful calamity for the Osbornes! I suppose that is the reason the young lady is Miss Osborne still. One with her good fortune and good looks ought to have changed her name ere this.”

“No, it is not the reason,” resumed Mr. Clifton.

“What is the reason, then?”

A faint flush tinged the brow of Mr. Clifton.

“I know more than one who would be glad to get Lulu, in spite of the murder. Do not deprecate Miss Osborne.”

“Not I, indeed; I like the young lady too well,” replied Captain Tilford. “The girl Kate has never been heard of since, has she?”

“Never,” said Mr. Clifton. “Did you know her well?” he deliberately added.

“I never knew her at all, if you mean Kate Truesdell. Why should you think I did? I never heard of her till Jack Hood amused me with the history.”

Mr. Clifton devoutly wished he could tell whether the man before him was telling the truth.

“Kate’s favors—I mean her smiles and chatter—were pretty freely dispensed, for she was heedless and vain. Amid others who got the credit of basking in her rays was a gentleman of the name of Tilford. Was it not yourself?”

Captain Tilford stroked his mustache with an air that

seemed to say he could not boast of his share of such baskings; in short, as if he felt half inclined to do it.

"Upon my word," he simpered, "you do me much honor. I can not confess to having been favored by Miss Kate."

"Then she was not the person you speak of who drove you—if I understood it aright—from the locality?" resumed Mr. Clifton, fixing his eyes upon him so as to take in every tone of the answer and shade of the countenance as he gave it.

"I should think not indeed. It was a married lady—more's the pity; young and pretty, vain and heedless, as you represented this Kate. Things went smoother after a time, and she and her husband—a stupid country fellow—became reconciled; but I have been ashamed of the affair ever since—doubly ashamed of it since I have grown wiser—and I do not care ever to be recognized as an actor in it, or to have it raked up against me."

Captain Tilford arose and took a somewhat hasty leave. Was he, or was he not the man? Mr. Clifton could not solve the doubt. Mr. Faber came in as he disappeared, closed the door, and advanced to Mr. Clifton, speaking in an undertone:

"Mr. Clifton, has it struck you that the gentleman just gone out may be the Captain Tilford you once spoke to me about—he who had used to gallop over from Hillsdale to see—Kate Truesdell?"

"It has struck me so most forcibly," replied Mr. Clifton. "Faber, I would give five hundred dollars out of my pocket this moment to be assured of the fact—if he is the same."

"I have seen him several times since he has been staying with the Hoods," pursued the old gentleman, "and my doubts have naturally been excited as to whether it could be the man in question. Curiously enough, Garfield, the doctor, was over from Hillsdale yesterday, and as I was walking with him arm in arm we met Captain Tilford. The two recognized each other and bowed, but merely as distant acquaintances.

"Do you know that gentleman?" said I to Garfield.

"Yes," he answered; "it is Mr. Northrop."

"Mr. Northrop, with something added to it," said I; "his name is Tilford."

“ ‘I know that,’ said Garfield; ‘but when he was in Hillsdale, some years ago, he chose to drop the Tilford, and the town in general knew him only as Mr. Northrop.’ ”

“ ‘What was he doing there?’ I asked.

“ ‘Amusing himself and getting into mischief,’ was the answer; ‘nothing very bad, only the random scrapes of young men.’ ”

“ ‘Was he often on horseback, riding to a distance?’ was my next question.

“ ‘Yes, that he was,’ replied the doctor, ‘none more fond of galloping across the country than he. I used to tell him he’d ride his horse to death.’ ”

“ ‘Now, Mr. Clifton, what do you think?’ ” concluded the clerk, “ ‘and so far as I could make out, this was about the same time of the tragedy at Truesdell’s.’ ”

“ ‘Think?’ ” replied Mr. Clifton. “ ‘What can I think, but that it is the same man? I am convinced of it now.’ ”

And leaning back in his chair, he fell into a deep reverie, regardless of the papers that lay before him.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE weeks went on—two or three—and things seemed to be progressing slowly. Captain St. Clare’s affairs—that is, the adjustment of them—did not advance at all. He had been three times over to see his uncle, securely boxed up in Mr. Clifton’s close carriage from the prying eyes of beholders; but his uncle seemed to be turning as obdurate as the creditors. Captain St. Clare had deceived him, he found out, inasmuch as certain sums of money, handed over by Mr. St. Clare some time back to settle certain claims, had been by the captain appropriated to his own purposes. Mr. St. Clare did not appear inclined to forgive the deceit, and vowed he would not pay his debts yet awhile. There was nothing for him to do but leave Barrington. He apparently meant what he said, for when the captain arose to leave Mr. St. Clare handed him money enough to pay his expenses away, and told him that his allowance would be continued as usual.

“ ‘How did you succeed with your uncle to-day?’ ” inquired Mr. Clifton, that evening at dinner, when his guest was back at the Barrington estate.

"Middling," replied Redmond St. Clare. "I did not do much with him. These old fogies like to take their own time over things."

An answer false as he was. It did not suit his plans to leave the Barrington estate yet, and, had he told the truth, he would have had no plea for remaining.

Another thing that was going on fast to bad, instead of to good, was the jealousy of Hazel.

How could it be otherwise, kept up as it was by Lulu's frequent meetings with Mr. Clifton, and by Captain St. Clare's comments and false insinuations regarding them? Discontented with herself and with everybody about her, Hazel was living now in a state of excitement—a dangerous resentment against her husband working in her heart. That very day—the one of Captain St. Clare's visit to his uncle—in driving through Barrington in her pony-carriage she had come upon her husband in close converse with Lulu Osborne. So absorbed were they that they never saw her, though her carriage passed close to the pavement where they stood.

On the morning following, as the Osborne family were seated at breakfast, the postman was seen coming toward the house. Lulu sprung from her seat to the open window, and the man advanced to her.

"Only one, miss. It is for yourself."

"Whom is it from?" began the judge, as Lulu returned to her chair.

In letters as well as in other things he was curious to know their contents, whether they might be addressed to him or not.

"It is from Mary, papa," replied Lulu, as she laid the letter by her side on the table.

"Why don't you open it and see what she says?"

"I will directly. I am just going to pour out some coffee for mamma."

Lulu handed her mamma the coffee, and then took up her letter. As she opened it a small bit of paper, folded, fell upon her lap. Fortunately, most fortunately, Judge Osborne, who at that moment had his nose in his coffee-cup, did not see it; but Mrs. Osborne did.

"Lulu, you have dropped something."

Lulu had seen also, and was clutching at the "something" with almost a guilty movement. She had no ready

answer at hand, but bent her eyes upon the letter, and Mrs. Osborne spoke again.

“My dear, something dropped on your lap.”

“Don’t you hear your mamma, young lady?” pursued the judge. “What is it that you have dropped?”

Lulu, with a crimson face of heat, arose from her chair and shook out her pretty muslin dress—somehow, Lulu’s dresses were always pretty.

“There’s nothing at all, papa—nothing that I can see;” and in sitting down she contrived to give her mother a warning look which silenced Mrs. Osborne.

Then Lulu read her sister’s letter and laid it open on the table for the benefit of anybody else who might like to do the same.

The judge snatched it up, taking first benefit to himself—as he was sure to do. He threw it down, grumbling:

“Not much in it. I think I’ll have a cup more of coffee.”

Finally the judge finished his breakfast, and strolled out into the garden. Mrs. Osborne turned to Lulu.

“My dear, why did you give me that mysterious look? And what was it that dropped upon your lap? It seemed to drop from Mary’s letter.”

“Well, mamma, it did fall from Mary’s letter. When Mary wants to tell me any news that she does not care the whole world to know she writes it on a separate piece of paper and puts it inside her letter. I suppose it was one of these bits that fell out.”

Lulu produced the scrap of paper as she spoke, and was opening it, Mrs. Osborne watching her movements and her countenance. She saw Lulu flush suddenly and vividly and then become deathly pale; she saw Lulu crush the note in her hand when read.

“Oh, mamma!” she uttered.

The flush of emotion came also into Mrs. Osborne’s delicate cheeks.

“Lulu, is it bad news?”

“Mamma, it—it is about Tom!” she whispered, glancing at the door and window, to see that none might be within sight or hearing. “I never thought of him. I only fancied Mary might be sending me some bit of news concerning her own affairs. How providential that papa

did not see the paper fall, and that you did not persist in your inquiries! If he—”

“Lulu, you are keeping me in suspense,” interrupted Mrs. Osborne, who had also grown white. “What should Mary know about Tom?”

Lulu smoothed out the writing and held it before her mother. It was as follows:

“I have had a curious note from T——. It was without date or signature, but I knew his handwriting. He tells me to let you know in the most sure and private manner that I can that he will soon make you another night visit. You are to watch the grove every evening when the present moon gets bright.”

Mrs. Osborne covered her face with her hands.

“Oh, mamma! it is an awful risk for him to run.”

“But to know that he is in life—to know that he is in life! And for the risk—Lulu, I dread it not, for he is innocent. Destroy the paper.”

“Harold Clifton must see it, mamma. I will destroy it afterward.”

“Then seek him out to-day, and show it him. I shall not be easy until it is destroyed, Lulu.”

Braving the comments of the gossips, hoping the visit would not reach the ears or eyes of the judge, Lulu went that day to the office of Mr. Clifton. He was not there; he was not at Barrington; he was gone to Hillsdale on business, and Mr. Faber thought it a question if he would be at the office again that day. If so, it would be late in the afternoon. Lulu, as soon as their dinner was over, took up her patient station at the gate, hoping to see him pass; but the time went by, and he did not. She had little doubt that he had returned home.

What should she do? Go up to the Barrington estate and see him, said her conscience. Lulu's mind was in a strange, excited state. It appeared to her that this visit of Tom's must have been especially designed by Providence that he might be confronted with Tilford. That they must be confronted, the one with the other, or rather, that Tom must have the opportunity given to him of seeing Tilford, was a matter of course; though how it was to be brought about Lulu could not guess. For all action and plans, she must depend upon Mr. Clifton. He ought to be put in

immediate possession of the news, for the moon was already three or four days old, and there was no knowing when Tom might appear.

"Mamma," she said, returning in-doors after seeing the judge depart on one of his evening visits, "I will go up to the Barrington estate, if you have no objections. I must see Mr. Clifton."

"What objections can I have, my child? I am all anxiety for you to see him. It is so unfortunate that he was out to-day when you ventured to his office. Mind you tell all, and ask him what is best to be done."

Away went Lulu. It had struck seven when she arrived at the Barrington estate.

"Is Mr. Clifton disengaged?"

"Mr. Clifton is not yet home, miss. The ladies are waiting dinner for him."

A check for Lulu. The servant asked her to walk in, but she declined, and turned from the door. She was in no mood for visit-paying.

Hazel had been standing at the window watching for her husband, wondering what made him so late; she observed Lulu approach the house, and saw her walk away again.

Presently the servant who answered the door entered the drawing-room.

"Was not that Miss Osborne?"

"Yes, Mrs. Clifton," was the man's reply. "She wanted Mr. Clifton. I said you were at home, but she would not enter."

Hazel said no more. She caught the eyes of Captain St. Clare fixed upon her with as much compassionate meaning as they dared express. She clasped her hands in pain, and turned again to the window.

Lulu was slowly walking down the avenue. Mr. Clifton was then in sight, coming on quickly. Hazel saw their hands meet in greeting.

"Oh, I am so thankful to have met you!" exclaimed Lulu, impulsively. "I actually went to your office to day, and I have been now to your house. We have great news!"

"Ay! What? About Tilford?"

"No. About Tom," replied Lulu, taking the scrap of paper from the folds of her dress. "This came to me this morning from Mary."

Mr. Clifton took the paper, and Lulu looked over him

while he read it, neither of them thinking that Hazel's jealous eyes and Captain St. Clare's evil ones were strained on them from the distant windows. Miss Clifton's also were, for the matter of that.

"Harold, it seems to me that Providence must be directing him hither at this moment. Our suspicions with regard to Tilford can now be set at rest. You must contrive that Tom shall see him. What can he be coming again for?"

"More money," was the supposition of Mr. Clifton. "Does Mrs. Osborne know of this?"

"She does, unfortunately. I opened the paper before her, never dreaming it was connected with Tom. I wish I could have spared mamma the news until he was actually here; the expectation and suspense I fear will make her ill. It terrifies me to that extent that I don't know what I am about," she continued. "Not a moment's rest or peace shall I have until he has been here and gone again. Poor, wandering, unhappy Tom, and not to be guilty!"

"He acted as though he were guilty, Lulu. And that line of conduct often entails as much trouble as real guilt."

"You do not believe him guilty?" she almost passionately uttered.

"I do not. I have little doubt of the guilt of Tilford."

"Oh, if it could but be brought home to him!" reiterated Lulu, "so that Tom might be cleared in the sight of all. How can you contrive that he shall see Tilford?"

"I can not tell. I must think about it. Let me know the instant he arrives, Lulu."

"Of course I will. It may be that he does not need money; that his errand is only to see mamma. He was always so fond of her."

"I must leave you," said Mr. Clifton, taking her hand in token of farewell. Then, as a thought occurred to him, he turned and walked a few steps with her without releasing her hand. He was quite unconscious that he retained it.

"You know, Lulu, if he should want money, and it should not be convenient to Mrs. Osborne to supply it at so short a notice, I can give it to him, as I did before."

"Thank you—thank you, Harold. Mamma felt sure you would."

She lifted her eyes to his with an expression of gratitude. But for the habitual control to which she had schooled her-

self, a warmer feeling might have mingled with it. Mr. Clifton nodded pleasantly and then set off toward the house at the pace of a steam-engine.

Two minutes in his dressing-room, and he entered the drawing-room, apologizing for having kept them waiting dinner, and explaining that he had been compelled to go to his office to give some orders subsequent to his return from Hillsdale. Hazel's lips were pressed together, and she preserved an obstinate silence. Mr. Clifton, in his unconcern, didn't notice it.

"What did Lulu Osborne want?" demanded Fannie, during dinner.

"She wanted to see me on business," was his reply, given in a tone that certainly did not invite his sister to pursue the subject.

"What was that you were reading over with her?" pursued the indefatigable Fannie. "It looked like a note."

"Ah, that would be telling," returned Mr. Clifton, willing to turn it off with gayety. "If young ladies choose to show me their love letters, I can not betray confidence, you know."

"What rubbish, Harold!" said she. "As if you could not say outright what Lulu wants without making a mystery of it. And she seems to be always wanting you."

Mr. Clifton glanced at his sister, a quick peculiar look. It seemed to speak both of seriousness and warning. Involuntarily her thoughts and her fears flew back to the past. It was sufficient to silence her.

That same evening Hazel's indignant and rebellious heart condescended to speak of it when alone with her husband.

"Why is it that she wants you so much, that Lulu Osborne?"

"It is private business, Hazel. She has to bring me messages from her mother."

"Must the business be kept from me?"

He was silent for a moment, considering whether he might tell her. What a pity he did not tell her. Was she not his wife, his other half? Ah, Harold Clifton, the day will come when you will see the mistake, the miserable mistake you made, when your wife invited your confidence and you did not see fit to trust her with it!

"It would not make you the happier to know it, Hazel,

There is a dark secret, you are aware, touching the Osborne family; it is connected with that."

She did not put faith in a word of the reply. She believed he could not tell her because her feelings as his wife would be outraged by the confession, and it goaded her anger into recklessness. Mr. Clifton, on his part, never gave a thought to the supposition that she might be jealous—he had believed that nonsense at an end years ago. He was perfectly honorable and true, giving her no shadow of cause or reason to be jealous of him; and being a practical, matter-of-fact man, it did not occur to him that he gave her every cause to be jealous.

Hazel was sitting the following morning moody and out of sorts. Captain St. Clare had accompanied Mr. Clifton in the most friendly manner possible to the park gates on his departure, and then stole along the hedge walk. He returned to Hazel with the news of an "ardent" interview with Lulu, who had been watching for Mr. Clifton at the gate. She sat sullenly digesting the tidings, when a note was brought in. It proved to be an invitation to dinner for the following Tuesday at a Mrs. Leonard's—for Mr. and Mrs. Clifton and Fannie.

She passed the note to Fannie.

"Will you go?" asked Fannie.

"Yes," replied Hazel. "Mr. Clifton and I both want a change of some sort," she added, in a mocking sort of spirit. "It may be as well to have it, if only for an evening." In truth, this unhappy jealousy, this distrust of her husband, appeared to have altered Hazel's very nature.

"And leave Captain St. Clare alone?" returned Fannie.

Hazel bent her head over the answer to the note, making no reply.

"He can remain here; he can dine by himself. Shall I accept the invitation for you?"

"No, I will not go," said Fannie.

"Then in that case there can be no difficulty with regard to Captain St. Clare," coldly spoke Hazel.

"I don't want his company; I am not fond of it," said Fannie. "I would go to Mrs. Leonard's but that I should require a new dress."

"That is easily had," said Hazel. "I want one myself."

"You want a new dress?" uttered Fannie. "Why, you have dozens!"

"I don't know that I could count a dozen in all," returned Hazel, chafing at the remark and the continual thwarting put upon her by Miss Clifton which had latterly seemed more than usually hard to endure.

Hazel concluded her note, folded, sealed it, and then rang the bell. As the man left the room with it she desired that Cora might be sent to her.

"Is it this morning, Cora, that the dress-maker comes to try on Miss Ethel's dress?" she inquired.

Cora hesitated and stammered, and glanced from her to Miss Clifton. The latter looked up.

"The dress-maker's not coming," said she, sharply. "I countermanded the order for the dress. Ethel does not require it."

"She does require it," answered Hazel. "I am a competent judge of what is necessary for my children."

"She no more requires one than you require the dress you are longing for," stoically persisted Fannie. "She has ever so many lying by; and her striped silk, turned, will make up as handsome as ever."

Cora backed out of the room and closed the door softly, but Hazel caught a compassionate look directed toward her. Her heart felt bursting with indignation and despair; there seemed to be no side on which she could turn for refuge. Pitied by her own servants!

She reopened her desk, and dashed off a haughty, peremptory note for the attendance of the dress-maker at the Barrington estate, commanding its immediate dispatch.

Miss Clifton groaned in her wrath.

"You will be sorry for not listening to me when your husband will be brought to poverty. He works like a slave now; and, with all his slaving, can scarcely, I fear, keep expenses down."

Poor Hazel, ever sensitive, began to think they might, what with one thing and another, be spending more than Mr. Clifton's means would justify; she knew their expenses were heavy.

The same tale had been dinned into her ear ever since she married him. She gave up in that moment all thought of the dress for herself and for Ethel; but her spirit, in her deep unhappiness, felt sick within her.

Cora had meanwhile flown to Sally's room, and was exercising her dearly beloved tongue in an exaggerated account of the matter; how Miss Clifton put upon Mrs. Clifton, and had forbidden a new dress to her, as well as to Miss Ethel.

Sally, sitting up that day for the first time, was gazing from the window at Captain St. Clare as Cora spoke.

"He is a handsome man—to look at him from this," she observed.

And a few more days passed on.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BRIGHT was the moon on that genial Monday night, bright were the evening stars, as they shone upon a solitary wayfarer who walked on the shady side of the road with his head down as though he did not care to court observation. He drew near the dwelling of Judge Osborne, plunged rapidly over some palings (after looking well to the right and left) into a field, and thence over the side wall into Judge Osborne's garden, where he remained amid the thick trees.

Lulu, anxious, troubled, worn out with the suspense of watching for her brother, would have given her head for her father to go out. But no; things were going by the rules of contrary. There sat the judge in full view of the garden and the grove, his chair drawn precisely in front of the window, his long pipe in his mouth.

"Are you going out, Thomas?" Mrs. Osborne ventured to say.

"No."

"Mamma, shall I ring for the blinds to be closed?"

"Blinds closed!" said the judge. "Who'd shut out this bright moon? You have got the lamp at the far end of the room, young lady, and can go to it."

Lulu ejaculated an inward prayer for patience—for safety for Tom, if he did come, and waited on, watching the grove in the distance. It came—the signal. Her quick eye caught it; a movement as if some person or thing had stepped out beyond the trees and stepped back again. Lulu's face turned white and her lips became dry.

"I am so warm! I must take a walk in the garden," she ejaculated, in her confused eagerness for an excuse.

She stole out, throwing a dark cloak over her shoulders

that it might render her less conspicuous to the judge. She did not dare to stand still when she reached the trees, or to penetrate them, but she caught glimpses of Tom's face, and her heart ached at the change in it. It was white, thin, and full of care, and his hair was turning gray.

"Oh, Tom darling, I can not stop and talk to you!" she wailed, in a deep whisper. "Papa is at home, you see, of all nights in the year."

"Can't I see my mother?"

"How can you? You must wait till to-morrow night."

"I don't like waiting a second night, Lulu. There's danger in every inch of ground that this neighborhood contains."

"But you must wait, Tom, for reasons. That man who caused all the mischief, Tilford—"

"Hang him!" gloomily interrupted Tom.

"He is at Barrington. At least there is a Tilford here whom we, Mr. Clifton and I, believe to be the same, and we want you to see him."

"Let me see him," panted Tom, whom the news appeared to agitate; "let me see him! Lulu—say—"

Lulu had passed on again, returning presently.

"You know, Tom, I must keep moving with papa's eyes there. He is a tall man, very good-looking, very fond of dress and ornaments, especially of diamonds."

"That's him!" cried Tom, eagerly.

"Mr. Clifton will contrive that you shall see him," she continued, stooping down as if to tie her shoe. "Should it prove to be the same, perhaps nothing can be immediately done toward clearing you, but it will be a great point ascertained. Are you sure you should know him again?"

"Sure that I should know him!" uttered Tom Osborne. "Should I know my own father? Should I know you? And you are not engraven on my heart in letters of blood as he is. How and when am I to see him, Lulu?"

"I can tell you nothing till I have consulted Mr. Clifton. Be here to-morrow as soon as ever the dusk will permit you; perhaps Mr. Clifton will contrive to bring him here. If—"

The window was thrown open, and the voice of Judge Osborne was heard from it.

"Lulu, are you wandering about there to take cold? Come in. Come in, I say."

“ Oh, Tom, I am so sorry!” she lingered to whisper. “ But papa is sure to be out to-morrow evening; he would not stay in two evenings hand running. Good-night, dear.”

There must be no delay now, and the next day Lulu, braving comments, appeared once more at the office of Mr. Clifton. Terribly did the rules of contrary seem in action just then. Mr. Clifton was not in, and the clerks did not know when to expect him. He was gone out for some hours, they believed.

“ Mr. Faber,” urged Lulu, as the old gentleman came to the door to greet her, “ I must see him.”

“ He will not be in till late in the afternoon, Miss Osborne. I expect him then. Is it anything I can do?”

“ No—no,” sighed Lulu.

At that moment Hazel and her little girl passed in the carriage. She saw Lulu at her husband’s office door. What should she be doing there, unless paying him a visit? A slight, haughty bow to Lulu, a pleasant nod and a smile to Mr. Faber, and the carriage rolled on.

It was four o’clock before Lulu could see Mr. Clifton. She communicated her tidings that Tom had arrived.

Mr. Clifton held deceit and all underhand doings in especial abhorrence; yet he deemed that he was acting right, under the circumstances, in allowing Captain Tilford to be secretly seen by Tom.

In haste he arranged his plans. It was the evening of his own dinner engagement at Mrs. Leonard’s. But that he must give up. Telling Lulu to dispatch Tom to his office as soon as he should make his appearance in the grove, and to urge him to come boldly, for none would know him in his disguise, he wrote a hurried note to Tilford, requesting him also to be at his office at eight o’clock that evening, as he had something to communicate to him.

The latter plea was no fiction, for he had received an important communication that morning relative to the business on which Captain Tilford had consulted him, and his own absence from the office had alone prevented his sending for him earlier.

Other matters were calling the attention of Mr. Clifton, and it was five o’clock ere he departed for the Barrington estate. He would not have gone so early but that he must inform his wife of his inability to keep the dinner engage-

ment. Mr. Clifton was one who never hesitated to sacrifice personal gratification to friendship or to business.

The carriage was at the door, and Hazel dressed and waiting for him in her dressing-room.

"Did you forget that the Leonards dine at six?" was her greeting.

"No, Hazel; but it was impossible for me to get here before. And I should not have come so soon but to tell you that I can not accompany you. You must make my excuses to Mrs. Leonard."

A pause. Strange thoughts were running through Hazel's mind.

"Why so?" she inquired.

"Some business has arisen which I am compelled to attend to this evening. As soon as I have snatched my dinner at home, I must hasten back to the office."

Was he making this excuse to spend the hours with Lulu Osborne? The idea that it was so took firm possession of her mind, and remained there. Her face expressed a variety of feelings, the most prominent that of resentment. Mr. Clifton saw it.

"You must not be annoyed, Hazel. I assure you it is no fault of mine. It is important private business that can not be put off, and which I can not delegate to Mr. Faber. I am sorry that it should so happen."

"You never return to your office in an evening," she remarked, with pale lips.

"No; because if anything arises to take us there after hours, Faber officiates. But the business to-night must be done by myself."

Another pause. Hazel suddenly broke it.

"Shall you join us later in the evening?"

"I believe I will not be able to do so."

She drew her light mantle around her, and swept down the stairs. Mr. Clifton followed to place her in the carriage. When he said good-bye she never answered, but looked straight out before her with a stony look.

"What time shall I bring the carriage?" inquired the footman, as she alighted at Mrs. Leonard's.

"Early. Half past nine."

A little before eight o'clock, Tom, in his disguise and slouched hat, rang dubiously at the outer door of Mr. Clif-

ton's office. That gentleman instantly opened it. He was quite alone.

"Come in, Tom," said he, grasping his hand. "Did you meet many whom you knew?"

"I never looked at whom I met," was the reply. "I thought if I looked at people they might look at me, so I came straight ahead, with my eyes before me. How the place has changed! There's a new brick building at the corner, where old Mark's shop used to be."

"That's the new police station. Barrington, I assure you, is becoming grand in public buildings. And how have you been, Tom?"

"Ailing and wretched," answered Tom. "How can I be otherwise, Mr. Clifton, with so false an accusation attached to me, and working like a slave as I do?"

"You may take off that disfiguring hat, Tom. No one is here."

Tom slowly took it from his head, and his fair face, so like his mother's, was disclosed. But the moment he was uncovered, he turned shrinkingly toward the entrance.

"If any one should come in!"

"Impossible," replied Mr. Clifton. "The front door is fast, and the building is supposed to be empty at this hour."

"For, if I should be seen and recognized, it might come to hanging, you know. You are expecting that cursed Tilford here. Lulu told me."

"Directly," replied Mr. Clifton. "From your description of the Tilford who murdered Truesdell, we believe this Captain Tilford to be the same man," pursued Mr. Clifton. "In person he appears to tally exactly; and I have ascertained that some years ago he was a great deal at Hillsdale, and got into some sort of scrape. He is here on a visit."

"But what an idiot he must be to venture here," uttered Tom. "Here, of all places in the world!"

"He counts, no doubt, upon not being known. So far as I can find out, Tom, nobody here knew him but you and Kate. I will put you in Mr. Faber's room—you may remember the little window in it—and from there you can take full view of Tilford, whom I will keep in the front office. You are sure you would recognize him after this lapse of time?"

"I should know him if it were fifty years to come. I should know him were he disguised as I am disguised. We can not"—Tom's voice sunk—"forget a man who has been the object of our frenzied jealousy."

"What has brought you to Barrington again, Tom?"

"Chiefly a desire within me that I could not get rid of," replied Tom. "It was not so much to see my mother and Lulu, though I longed to see them since my illness—but a feeling was within me that I could not rest away from it. So I said I'd risk it again, just for a day."

"I thought you might possibly want some assistance, as before."

"I do want that also," said Tom. "Not much; my illness has run me into debt, and if my mother can let me have a little I shall be thankful."

"I am sure she will," answered Mr. Clifton. "You shall have it from me to-night. What has been the matter with you?"

"The beginning of it was a kick from a horse. That was last winter, and it laid me up for six weeks. Then, in the spring, after I had got well and was at work again, I caught some sort of fever, and down again I was for six weeks. I have not been well since."

"How is it you have never written or sent me your address?"

"Because I dared not," answered Tom, timorously. "I should always be in fear—not of you Mr. Clifton, but of its becoming known in some way or other. The time is getting on. Is that Tilford sure to come?"

"He sent me word that he would, in reply to my note. And—there he is!" said Mr. Clifton, as a ring was heard at the bell.

"Now, Tom, come this way. Bring your hat."

Tom complied by putting the hat on his head, pulling it so low down that it touched his nose. He felt himself safer in it. Mr. Clifton showed him into Mr. Faber's room, and then turned the key upon him and put it in his pocket.

Mr. Clifton went to the front door, opened it, and admitted Captain Tilford. He brought him into the clerk's office, which was bright with gas, keeping him in conversation for a few minutes, standing, and then asking him to be seated, all in full view of the little window.

"I beg pardon for being late," Captain Tilford ob-

served. "I am half an hour beyond the time you mentioned, but the Hoods had two or three friends at dinner, and I could not get away. I hope, Mr. Clifton, you have not come to your office to-night purposely for me."

"Business must be attended to," somewhat evasively answered Mr. Clifton. "I have been out myself nearly all day. We received a communication from Boston this morning relative to your affair, and I am sorry to say it is anything but satisfactory. They will not wait."

"But I am not liable, Mr. Clifton. Not liable in justice."

"No—if what you tell me be correct. But justice and law are sometimes in opposition, Captain Tilford."

Captain Tilford sat in perplexity.

"They will not get me arrested here, will they?"

"They would have done it beyond a doubt; but I have caused a letter to be written and dispatched to them which must bring forth an answer before any violent proceedings are taken. That answer will be here day after to-morrow."

"And what am I to do then?"

"I think it probable there may be a way then of check-mating them. But I am not sure, Captain Tilford, that I can give my attention further to this affair."

"I hope and trust you will," was the reply.

"You have not forgotten that I told you at first I could not promise you to do so," rejoined Mr. Clifton. "You shall hear from me to-morrow. If I carry it on for you, I will then appoint an hour for you to be here the following morning; if not, why, I dare say you will find a solicitor as capable of assisting you as I am."

"But why will you not? What is the reason?"

"I can not always give reasons for what I do," was the response. "You shall hear from me to-morrow."

He rose as he spoke. Captain Tilford also arose. Mr. Clifton detained him yet a few moments, and then saw him out at the front door and fastened it.

He returned and released Tom. The latter took off his hat as he advanced into the blaze of light.

"Well, Tom, is it the same man?"

"No, sir; not in the least like him."

Mr. Clifton felt a strange relief—relief for Captain Tilford's sake. He had rarely seen one whom he could so little associate with the notion of a murderer as Captain Til-

ford, and he was a man who exceedingly won upon his regard. He could heartily help him out of his dilemma now.

"Excepting that they are both tall, with nearly the same colored hair, there is no resemblance whatever between them," proceeded Tom. "Their faces, their figures, are as opposite as light is from dark. That other, in spite of his handsome features, had the expression at times of a demon, but the expression of this one is the best part of his face. Truesdell's murderer had a curious look here."

"Where?" questioned Mr. Clifton; for Tom had only pointed to his face generally.

"Well, I can not say precisely where it lay, whether in the eyebrows or the eyes; I could not tell when I used to have him before me, but it was in one of them. Ah! Mr. Clifton, I thought when Lulu told me Tilford was here it was too good news to be true. Depend on it, he won't venture to Barrington again. This man is no more like that other villain than you are like him."

"Then, as it is set at rest, we had better be going, Tom. You have to see your mother, and she must be waiting in anxiety. How much money do you want?"

"One hundred dollars would do, but—"

Tom stopped in hesitation.

"But what?" asked Mr. Clifton. "Speak out, Tom."

"I would be glad to have more. I might be sick again."

"You must take five hundred, Tom," said Mr. Clifton, counting over the money to him. "Now, will you walk with me to the grove of trees, or will you walk alone? I mean to see you there in safety."

Tom thought he would prefer to walk alone; everybody they met might speak to Mr. Clifton.

The latter inquired why he chose moonlight nights for visits.

"It is pleasanter for night traveling. And had I chosen dark nights, Lulu could not have seen my signal from the trees," was the answer.

They went out, and proceeded unmolested to the house of Judge Osborne. It was past nine then.

"I am so much obliged to you, Mr. Clifton," whispered Tom, as they walked up the path.

"I wish I could help you more effectually, Tom, and clear up the mystery. Is Lulu on the watch?"

"Yes; the door is slowly opening."

Tom stole across the hall into the parlor to his mother's room. Lulu approached and softly whispered, Mr. Clifton standing just outside the portico; her voice trembled with the suspense of what the answer might be.

"Is it the same man—the same Tilford?"

"No. Tom says this man bears no resemblance to the real one."

"Oh!" uttered Lulu, in her surprise and disappointment. "Not the same? and for the best part of poor Tom's evening to have been taken up for nothing!"

"Not quite for nothing," said Mr. Clifton. "The question is now set at rest."

"Set at rest?" repeated Lulu. "It is left in more uncertainty than ever."

"Set at rest as regards Captain Tilford. And while our suspicions were concentrated upon him we did not look to other quarters."

When they entered the sitting-room Mrs. Osborne was crying over Tom, and Tom was crying over her; but she seized the hand of Mr. Clifton.

"You have been very kind; I don't know whatever we should do without you, and I want to tax your kindness yet further. Has Lulu mentioned it?"

"I could not talk in the hall, mamma; the servants might have overheard."

"Mr. Osborne is not quite well, and we fear he will be home early in consequence; otherwise, we should have been quite safe till ten. Should he come in and see Tom—the very thought sends me into a shiver. Lulu and I were discussing it all the evening, and we can only think of one plan. It is that you will stay in the garden near the gate, and should he come in, stop him and keep him in conversation. Lulu will be with you, and will run in with the warning, and Tom can go inside the closet in the hall till Mr. Osborne has entered and is safe in his own room, and then he can make his escape. Will you do this, Harold?"

"Certainly I will."

"I can not part with him before ten o'clock, unless I am obliged to," she whispered, pressing Mr. Clifton's hand in her earnest gratitude. "You don't know what it is,

Harold, to have a lost son home for an hour but once in seven years. At ten o'clock we will part."

Mr. Clifton and Lulu began to pace the path, in compliance with the wishes of Mrs. Osborne, keeping near the entrance gate. When they were turning the second time, Mr. Clifton offered her his arm. It was an act of mere politeness. Lulu took it, and there they waited and waited, but the judge did not come.

Punctually to the minute—half past nine—Hazel's carriage arrived at Mrs. Leonard's, and she came out immediately, a headache being her plea for her early departure. She had not far to go to reach Barrington—about two miles. It was a by-road nearly all the way. They could emerge into the open road if they pleased, but it was a trifle further. Suddenly a gentleman approached the carriage as it was rolling along, and waved his hand to the coachman to pull up. In spite of the glowing moonlight, Hazel at first did not recognize him, for he wore a disfiguring fur cap, the laps of which were tied over his ears and cheeks. It was Captain St. Clare. She put down the window.

"I thought it must be your carriage. How early you are returning! Were you tired of your entertainers?"

"Why, he knew what time she was returning!" thought John to himself. "He asked me. A false sort of a man, I think."

"I came out for a stroll, and have tired myself," he proceeded. "Will you take compassion on me and let me ride home with you?"

She acquiesced; she could not well do otherwise. The footman sprung down and opened the door, and Captain St. Clare took his place beside Hazel.

"Take the other road," he put out his head to say to the coachman, and the man touched his hat.

The other road would cause them to pass Mr. Osborne's.

"I did not know you," she began, gathering herself into her own corner. "What ugly thing is that you have on? It is like a disguise."

He was taking off the "ugly thing," as she spoke, and began to twirl it round on his hand.

"Disguise? Oh, no! I have no creditors in the immediate neighborhood of Barrington."

False as ever! It was worn as a disguise, and he knew it.

"Is Mr. Clifton at home?" she inquired.

"No." Then, after a pause: "I expect he is more agreeably engaged."

The tone brought the tingling blood to the cheeks of Hazel. She wished to preserve a dignified silence, and did so for a few moments. But the jealous question broke out:

"Engaged in what manner?"

"As I came by Osborne's house just now I saw two people, a gentleman and a young lady, walking lovingly together, enjoying this lovely moonlight night. They were your husband and Lulu Osborne."

Hazel almost gnashed her teeth; the jealous doubts which had been tormenting her all the evening were confirmed. That the man whom she hated—yes, in her blind anger she hated him then—should so impose upon her, should excuse himself by lies—lies base and false—from accompanying her, on purpose to pass the hours with Lulu Osborne! Had she been alone in the carriage a torrent of passion would probably have escaped her.

She leaned back, panting in her emotion, but concealed it from Captain St. Clare. As they came opposite to Judge Osborne's, she deliberately bent forward and scanned the garden with eager eyes.

There, in the bright moonlight, all too bright and clear, slowly paced, arm in arm, and drawn close to each other, her husband and Lulu. With a choking sob that could no longer be controlled or hidden, Hazel sunk back again.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE minutes flew on—a quarter to ten, a quarter past ten—and still Tom Osborne lingered on with his mother, and still Mr. Clifton and Lulu paced patiently the garden path. At half past ten Tom came forth, having taken farewell of his mother. Then came Lulu's tearful good-bye, which Mr. Clifton witnessed; then a hard grasp of that gentleman's hand, and Tom plunged amid the trees to depart the way he came.

"Good-night, Lulu!" said Mr. Clifton.

"Will you not come in and say good-night to mamma?"

"Not now; it is late. Tell her how glad I am things have gone off so well."

He set off at a rapid pace toward his home, and Lulu leaned on the gate to indulge her tears. Not a soul passed to interrupt her, and the judge did not come.

What could have become of him? He did not arrive that night until twelve o'clock. So far, well—as it happened.

Lulu knew not how long she lingered at the gate; ten minutes it may have been. Nobody summoned her.

Exceedingly surprised was Lulu to hear footsteps and to find they were Mr. Clifton's.

"The more haste, the less speed, Lulu," he called out, as he came up. "I had got half way home, and have had to come back again. When I went into your sitting-room I left a small parcel containing papers on the table. Will you get it for me?"

Lulu ran in and brought it out, and Mr. Clifton, with a brief word of thanks, sped away with it.

She leaned on the gate as before, the ready tears flowing again; her heart was aching for Tom—it was aching for the disappointment that had developed respecting Captain Tilford. Still nobody passed; still the steps of her father were not heard, and Lulu stayed on. But what was that figure cowering under shade of the hedge at a distance, and seemingly watching her? Lulu strained her eyes, while her heart beat as if it would burst its bounds. Surely, surely, it was her brother! What had he ventured back for?

Tom it was. When fully assured that Lulu was standing there, he knew the judge was still absent, and ventured to advance. He appeared to be in a strange state of emotion, his breath labored, his whole frame trembling.

"Lulu, Lulu!" he ejaculated, "I have seen Tilford."

Lulu thought him demented.

"I know you saw him," she slowly said; "but it was not the right Tilford."

"Not him," breathed Tom, "not the gentleman I saw to-night in Clifton's office. I have seen the fellow himself. Why do you stare so at me, Lulu?"

Lulu was scanning his face keenly. It appeared to her a strange tale he was telling.

"When I left here I cut across into the side road, which is more private for me than this road," proceeded Tom.

"Just as I got to that clump of trees—you know it, Lulu

—I saw somebody coming toward me at a distance. I stepped back behind the trunks of trees into the shade of the hedge, for I don't care to be met, though I am disguised. He came along the road, and I looked at him. I knew him long before he was abreast of me; it was Tilford!"

Lulu made no comment; she was digesting the news.

"Every drop of blood within me began to tingle, and an impulse came upon me to spring upon him and accuse him of the murder of Truesdell," went on Tom in the same excited manner; "but I restrained it, or perhaps my courage failed. One of the reproaches against me used to be that I was a physical coward, you know, Lulu," he added, his tone changing to bitterness. "In a struggle Tilford would have had the best of it; he is taller and more powerful than I, and might have battered me to death. A man who can commit one murder won't hesitate at a second."

"Tom, do you think you could have been deceived?" she urged. "You had been talking of Tilford, and your thoughts were naturally bearing upon him. Imagination—"

"Be still, Lulu!" he interrupted, in a tone of pain. "Imagination, indeed! Did I not tell you he was stamped here?" touching his breast. "Do you take me for a child or an imbecile, that I should fancy I see Tilford in every shadow or meet people where I do not? He had his hat off, as if he had been walking fast; he carried the hat in one hand, and what looked like a gripsack. With the other hand he was pushing his hair from his brow—in this way—a peculiar way," added Tom, slightly lifting his hat and pushing back his hair. "By that action alone I should have known him, for he was always doing it in the old days. And there was his white hand adorned with the diamond ring!"

Tom's voice and manner were singularly earnest, and a conviction of the truth of his assertion flashed over his sister.

"I saw his face as plainly as ever I saw it, every feature; he is scarcely altered, Lulu; you need not doubt me. I swear it was Tilford!"

She grew as excited as he was; not that she believed the news; it was telling upon her; reason left its place, and impulse succeeded. Lulu did not wait to weigh her action.

"Tom, Mr. Clifton ought to know this. He has but just gone; we may overtake him if we try."

Forgetting the strange appearance it would have at that hour of the night should she meet any one who knew her, forgetting what the consequence might be did Judge Osborne return and find her absent, Lulu set off with a fleet foot, Tom more stealthily following her, his eyes cast in all directions. She succeeded in reaching Mr. Clifton before he turned into his own grounds.

"Lulu!" he exclaimed, in extreme astonishment, "Lulu!"

"Harold! Harold!" she panted, gasping for breath. "I am not out of my mind; but do come and speak to Tom! He has just seen the real Tilford."

Mr. Clifton, amazed and wondering, turned back. They got over the field stile, and there Tom told his tale. Mr. Clifton did not appear to doubt it as Lulu had done.

"I am sure there is no one named Tilford in the neighborhood but the gentleman you saw in my office to-night, Tom," observed Mr. Clifton, after some deliberation. "It is very strange!"

"He may be staying here under a feigned name," replied Tom. "There can be no mistake that it is Tilford whom I have just seen."

"How was he dressed? As a gentleman?"

"Catch him dressing as anything else," returned Tom.

Mr. Clifton was silent, Lulu also; but the thoughts of both were busy.

"Tom," observed the former, "I should advise you to remain a day or two in the neighborhood and look out for this man. You may see him again, and may track him home; it is very desirable to find out who he really is, if practicable."

"But the danger," urged Tom.

"Your fears magnify that. I am quite certain that nobody would know you in daylight disguised as you are now. So many years have flown since that people have forgotten to think about you."

But Tom could not be persuaded; he was full of fears. Mr. Clifton got from him an address in New York to which he might write in case anything turned up and Tom's presence should be necessary. He then once more

said farewell, and quitted them, his way lying past Mr. Clifton's home.

"And now to see you back, Lulu," said Mr. Clifton.

"Indeed, you shall not do it; late as it is, and tired as you must be. I came here alone; Tom did not keep near me."

"I can not help your having come here alone, but you may rely upon it, I do not let you go back alone. Nonsense, Lulu! Allow you to go alone by yourself at eleven o'clock at night? What are you thinking of?"

He gave Lulu his arm, and they pursued their way.

"How late Hazel will think you!" observed Lulu.

"I do not know that Hazel has returned home yet. My being late once in a while is of no consequence."

"Thank you very greatly," she said, as they reached the gate, and Mr. Clifton finally turned away.

Lulu stole in and found the coast clear. Her papa had not returned.

Hazel was in her dressing-room when Mr. Clifton entered. She was seated at a table writing. A few questions as to her evening's visit, which she answered in the briefest manner possible, and he then asked her if she was not going to retire.

"By and by; I am not sleepy."

"I must retire at once, Hazel, for I am dead tired."

"You can," was her answer.

He bent down to kiss her, but she dexterously turned her face away. He supposed she felt hurt that he had not gone with her to the party, and placed his hand on her shoulder with a smile.

"You foolish child, to be aggrieved at that! It was no fault of mine."

He never forgot the look she turned on him; it was so full of indignation, despair, wounded love and sorrow.

"Hazel, I could not help myself. I will talk to you in the morning; I am too tired to-night. I suppose you will not be long."

He was too tired to talk to her, but not too tired to walk with Lulu Osborne for hours. Her head bent over her writing again, and she made no reply.

Mr. Clifton went to his room, and was soon fast asleep.

Some time after, Hazel went softly upstairs to Sally's room. Sally, in her first sleep, was suddenly aroused from

it. 'There stood Hazel, a wax-light in her hand. Sally rubbed her eyes and collected her senses, and finally sat up in bed.

"Oh, Mrs. Clifton, are you ill?"

"Ill? Yes; ill and wretched!" answered Hazel; and ill she looked, for she was perfectly white. "Sally, I want a promise from you. If anything should happen to me, stay at Barrington with the children."

Sally stared in amazement, too astonished to make any reply.

"Sally, you promised it once before; promise it again. Whatever happens, you will stay with my shildren when I am gone?"

"I will stay with them. But, oh! Mrs. Clifton, what is the matter with you? Are you taken suddenly ill?"

"Good-bye, Sally!" murmured Hazel, gliding from the room as softly as she had entered it.

And Sally, after an hour of perplexity, dropped asleep again.

Sally was not the only one whose rest was disturbed that eventful night. Mr. Clifton himself awoke, and to his surprise found that his wife had not come to bed. He wondered what the time was and struck his repeater. A quarter past three!

Rising, he made his way to the door of his wife's dressing-room. It was in darkness, and, so far as he could judge by absence of sound, unoccupied.

"Hazel!"

No reply. Nothing but the echo of his own voice in the silence of the night.

He struck a match, and lighted a taper, partially dressed himself, and went out to look for her. He feared she might have been taken ill, or else that she had fallen asleep in one of the rooms. But nowhere could she be found, and feeling perplexed, proceeded to his sister's room and knocked.

Miss Clifton was a light sleeper, and arose at once.

"Who's that?" called out she.

"It is only I, Fannie," said Mr. Clifton.

"You? What in the name of fortune do you want? You can come in."

Mr. Clifton opened the door, and met the keen eyes of his sister bent on him.

"Is anybody ill?" she demanded.

"I think Hazel must be; I can not find her."

"Not find her!" echoed Fannie. "Why, what's the time?"

"It is three o'clock. She has not been to bed. I can not find her in the sitting-room, neither is she in the children's room."

"Then, I'll tell you she has gone worrying about Sally. Perhaps the girl may be in pain to-night."

Mr. Clifton was in full retreat toward Sally's room at this suggestion, when his sister called to him:

"If anything is the matter with Sally, you come and tell me, Harold, for I will get up and see after her."

He reached Sally's room and softly opened the door, fully expecting to find a light there, and his wife sitting by the bedside. There was no light, however, save that which came from the taper he held, and he saw no signs of his wife. Where was she? Could Sally tell him? He stepped inside the room and called her.

Sally started up in a fright, which changed to astonishment when she recognized him. He inquired whether Hazel had been there, and for a few moments Sally did not answer. She had been dreaming of Hazel, and could not at first detach the dream from the visit which had probably given rise to it.

"What did you say, sir? Is Mrs. Clifton worse?"

"I asked if she has been here. I can not find her."

"Why, yes," said Sally, now fully aroused. "She came here and woke me. That was just before twelve, for I heard the clock strike; she did not stay here a minute, sir."

"Woke you?" repeated Mr. Clifton. "What did she want? What did she come here for?"

Thoughts are quick, imagination is quicker; and Sally was giving the reins to both. Mrs. Clifton's gloomy and ambiguous words were crowding on her brain. Three o'clock! and she had not been in bed and was not to be found in the house! A nameless horror struggled to Sally's face, her eyes dilating with it; she seized and threw on a flannel gown which lay on a chair by the bed, and forgetful of Mr. Clifton, who stood there, out she jumped to the floor. All minor considerations faded to insignificance beside the terrible dread which had taken possession

of her. Claspings the flannel gown tight around her with one hand, she laid the other on the arm of Mr. Clifton.

"Oh, Mr. Clifton! oh! she has destroyed herself. I see it all now!"

"Sally!" sternly interrupted Mr. Clifton.

"She has destroyed herself, as sure as that we two are standing here!" persisted Sally, her own face livid with emotion. "I can understand her words now; I could not before. She came here and her face was like a corpse as the light fell upon it, saying she had come to get a promise from me to stay with her children when she was gone. I asked whether she was ill, and she answered:

" 'Yes, ill and wretched!'

"Oh, sir! may Heaven support you under this dreadful trial!"

Mr. Clifton felt bewildered, perplexed. Not a syllable did he believe. He was not angry with Sally, for he thought she had lost her reason.

"It is so, sir, incredible as you may deem my words!" pursued Sally, wringing her hands. "Mrs. Clifton has been miserably unhappy, and that has driven her to it!"

"Sally, are you in your senses or out of them?" demanded Mr. Clifton, a certain sternness in his tone. "Mrs. Clifton miserably unhappy? What do you mean by such an assertion?"

Before Sally could answer, an addition was received to the company in the person of Miss Clifton, who, full of curiosity, and hearing voices in Sally's room, which was above her own, had ascended, not choosing to be shut out from the conference.

"What ever is the matter?" cried she. "Is Hazel found?"

"She is not found," returned Sally, whose lamentable and unusual state of excitement completely overpowered her customary quiet respect and plain good sense. "And, ma'am, I am glad that you have come up, for what I was about to say to Mr. Clifton I would prefer to say in your presence. When Mrs. Clifton is brought into this house, and laid down before us, dead, what will your feelings be? You have made her life a misery. Yes you have!"

"Highly-tighty!" uttered Fannie, staring at Sally in consternation. "What is all this? Where is Mrs. Clifton?"

“She has gone and taken the life that was not hers to take,” sobbed Sally, “and I say she has been driven to it. She has not been allowed to indulge a will of her own, poor thing, since she came back to the Barrington estate; in her own house she has been less free than any one of her servants. You have curbed her, ma’am, and snapped at her, and made her feel that she was a slave to your caprices and temper. All these years she has been crossed and put upon; everything, in fact, but beaten, ma’am; you know she has, and she has borne it all in silence, like a patient angel, never, as I believe, complaining to her husband. He can say whether she has or not. We all love her, we felt sorry for her; and Mr. Clifton’s heart would have bled had he suspected what she had to put up with day by day and year after year.”

Miss Clifton’s tongue was glued to her mouth. Her brother, confounded at the rapid words, could scarcely gather in their sense.

“What is it you are saying, Sally?” he asked, in a low tone. “I do not understand.”

“I have longed to say it to you many a hundred times, sir, but it is right that you should hear it now things have come to this dreadful ending. Since the very night she came here your wife she has been taunted with the cost she has brought to the Barrington estate and to you. If she wanted but the simplest thing she was forbidden to have it, and told that she was bringing her husband to poverty. For this very dinner-party that she went to to-night, she wished for a new dress, and your cruel words, ma’am, forbade her having it. She ordered a new dress for Miss Ethel, and you countermanded it. You have told her that her husband worked like a slave to support her extravagance when you know that she was never extravagant; that none were less inclined to go beyond proper limits than she. I have seen her, ma’am, come away from your reproaches with the tears in her eyes, and her hands meekly clasped upon her bosom, as though life was heavy to bear. A gentle-spirited, high-born lady, as she was, could not fail to be driven to desperation; and I know that she has been.”

Mr. Clifton turned to his sister.

“Can this be true?” he inquired, in a tone of deep agitation.

She did not answer. Whether it was the shade cast by

the reflection of the wax taper, her face looked of a green cast; and for the first time probably in Miss Clifton's life, her words failed.

"May you be forgiven, Fannie!" he murmured as he went out of the room.

He descended to his own. That his wife had laid violent hands upon herself his reason utterly repudiated; she was one of the least likely to commit so great a sin. He believed that, in her unhappiness, she might have wandered out in the grounds, and was lingering there. By this time the house was aroused, and the servants were astir. Sally—surely a supernatural strength was given her, for though she had been able to put her foot to the ground, she had not yet walked upon it—crept down-stairs and went into Hazel's dressing-room. Mr. Clifton was hastily assuming the articles of attire he had not yet put on to go out and search the grounds when Sally limped in holding out a note. Sally did not stand on ceremony that night.

"I found this in the dressing-glass drawer, sir. It is Mrs. Clifton's writing."

He took it in his hand, and looked at the address!

"Harold Clifton." Though a calm man, one who had his emotions under his own control, he was no stoic, and his fingers shook as he broke the seal.

"When years go on, and my children ask where their mother is, and why she left them, tell them that you, their father, goaded her on to it; tell them, at the same time, that you outraged and betrayed her ere she quitted them in her despair.

"I could have endured your sister's abuse, but when you chose to forsake me for another my poor heart could bear no more. Farewell."

The letter swam before his eyes. How had he outraged her? In what manner had he goaded her to it? A horrible suspicion began to dawn upon him, but he could not put it in words.

At that moment the voices of the servants in the corridor outside penetrated to his ears. Of course they were peering about, and making their own comments—Cora, with her long tongue, the busiest. They were saying that Captain St. Clare was not in his room, that his bed was not slept in.

Sally sat on a chair—she could not stand watching Mr. Clifton. Never had she seen him betray agitation so powerful. He walked to the door, the open note in his hand, then turned, and stood still—as if he did not know what he was doing. Probably he did not. Then he took out his pocket-book, put the note inside it, and returned it to his pocket, his hands trembling equally with his livid lips.

“You need not mention this,” he said to Sally, indicating the note. “It concerns myself alone.”

“Sir, does it say she is dead?”

“She is not dead.” He was going to say, “had left him with a broken heart.”

“Why, who is this?” uttered Sally.

It was little Ethel, stealing in with a frightened face, in her little white gown. The commotion had aroused her.

“What is the matter?” she asked. “Where’s mamma?”

“Child, you’ll catch your death of cold,” said Sally.

“Go back to bed.”

“But I want mamma.”

“In the morning, dear,” evasively returned Sally.

Mr. Clifton left the room, and Sally heard him go out at the hall door, and bang it after him. Ethel went and stood outside the room door; the servants in a group near did not observe her. Presently she came running back, and disturbed Sally from her reverie.

“Sally, is it true?”

“Is what true, my dear?”

“They are saying that Captain St. Clare has taken away mamma?”

“Child, child, go to bed! They may say what they please, but Sally will never believe she has gone with that man.”

“Oh, Sally, I want mamma! When will she come back?”

Sally hid her face in her hands to conceal its emotion from the child. And just then Miss Clifton entered on tip-toe, and humbly sat down on a low chair, her face green with its grief, its remorse, and its horror.

CHAPTER XXV.

To return to Hazel. She was endowed with sensitively refined delicacy, with an innate, lively consciousness of right

and wrong. A nature such as hers is one of the last that may be expected to err, and but for that most fatal misapprehension regarding her husband, the jealous belief fanned by Captain St. Clare, that his love was given to Lulu Osborne, and that the two were uniting to deceive her, she never would have fled from her home, her husband and children.

The scales had been gradually falling from her eyes as to the true character of Captain St. Clare, and as she was speeding away from Barrington in the midnight train, and thought with bitterness of the three who had destroyed her life's happiness, her only desire was to get as far away from them as she possibly could.

The train was within a short distance of the station when there came a sudden shock and crash as of the day of doom; and engine, cars, and passengers lay in one confused mass at the foot of a steep embankment. The darkness added to the awful confusion.

The car in which Hazel traveled lay beneath a superincumbent mass of ruins; she was among the last passengers to be extricated. Hazel was alive and conscious, but so severely injured that the medical men who had been brought to the spot in all haste turned from her to give their attention to the other sufferers whose case seemed less desperate. She heard them say that she would not survive amputation, and that nothing else could be done; that she must die. She was unable to move, but the shock had deadened the sensation; she was not yet in pain, and her mind was for a short interval clear and lucid. A Sister of Charity approached the stretcher on which she had been laid, and offered her some water. Hazel drank eagerly.

"Is there anything else I can do?" asked the sister. "Have you no message or instructions for your friends? If you will trust me, I will fulfill your wishes. While your mind is preserved clear it will be well to settle your duties toward those you are leaving behind."

The sister had heard what the doctor said of Hazel's condition.

"Those who should be my friends will rejoice to hear that I am no more," said Hazel.

"Can I write to any one for you?" asked the sister. "Tell me now, while you can think of it."

"Have you paper and writing things at hand? Write

then—direct the letter to Mr. Melborne, Esq. Could I not write a line myself? I think I could, if you will hold the paper before me; my hands are not injured, my intellect is clear.”

The compassionate sister complied, and Hazel contrived to scrawl a few words as she lay, first directing the letter to Mr. Melborne's town house. They were to the effect that she was dying from the fatal injuries of the railway accident. She thanked Mr. Melborne for all his kindness to her; she was glad to die and to be at rest.

“Go to Mr. Clifton,” she continued, “say that I thank him for all he has done for me, and ask him to sometimes talk to the children of their mother.”

She had written so far, when the torture of pain, which had begun to make itself more and more felt, was becoming intolerable. Gathering her strength for a last effort she wrote in characters like one on the rack might have signed his confession, “Hazel,” and whispered:

“Send it when I am dead—not before; and add a few words of confirmation.”

When at length the surgeon came up to Hazel to examine more minutely the injuries she had sustained, she was quite insensible, and they thought she was dead. They said so to the sister, who was then kneeling beside her, repeating the prayers appointed for the passing soul. She finished them, and retired to a distance, other sufferers claiming her services. She did not return to Hazel, whom she fully believed to be dead; and she dispatched the letter, writing in it, as requested, some words of confirmation. The dead were buried and a special mass was said for them. The survivors were sent to the Sisters Hospital; all that could be done for them was done, neither skill nor kindness being wanting. The sister who had been with Hazel at the first was detailed to another hospital at some distance, so she did not see Hazel again.

Hazel recovered consciousness and found herself lying on a snow-white bed and a gentle-faced sister bending over her. It was long before she could recall what had happened or understand that she had not died. The surgeons, on further inspection, had found life still lingering in her shattered frame. The injuries were terrible enough, but not of necessity fatal, though the prospect of recovery was faint. It would have been cruel to have an operation with

slender chances of success, and they tried other means, which promised to succeed. Hazel was still fluctuating between life and death; but the tide began at length slowly to set in toward life. She remained in the hospital three months as a patient, and had endeared herself by her meekness and patience to all the good sisters, so it was not surprising, when she begged to remain longer, that the sisters were glad to keep her for an indefinite time. The change that had passed over her was little less than death itself; no one could have recognized in the pale, thin, shattered invalid she who had been known as Hazel Clifton.

The letter was duly delivered to Mr. Melborne's address, but he was in Europe, and a year went by before he got it.

A few mornings after the railroad accident Mr. Clifton left the Barrington estate and proceeded to his office as usual. Scarcely was he seated when Mr. Faber looked at him inquiringly, for it was not Mr. Clifton's custom to be intruded upon by any person until he had opened his letters; then he would ring for Mr. Faber. The letters and the newspaper lay on the table before him. The old gentleman came up in a covert, timid sort of way which made Mr. Clifton look all the more.

"I beg your pardon, sir. Will you let me ask if you have heard any particular news?"

"Yes, I have heard it," replied Mr. Clifton.

"Then, sir, I beg your pardon a thousand times over. It occurred to me that you probably had not, Mr. Clifton, and I came upon it suddenly in the paper, and came to prepare you."

"To prepare me!" echoed Mr. Clifton, as Mr. Faber was turning away. "Why, what has come to you, Faber? Are you afraid my nerves are growing delicate, or that I shall faint over the loss of a few hundred dollars? At the very most, we shall not suffer above that extent."

Mr. Faber turned back again.

"It's not that, Mr. Clifton. They won't effect us much; and—"

"What is it, then?"

"Then you have not heard it, sir. I am glad I'm in time. It might not be well for you to have seen it without a word of preparation, Mr. Clifton."

"If you have not gone demented, you will tell me what you mean, and leave me to my letters," cried Mr. Clifton,

wondering excessively at his sober, matter-of-fact clerk's words and manner.

Mr. Faber laid his hand upon the newspaper.

"It's here, Mr. Clifton, in the column of the deaths; the first on the list. Please prepare yourself a little before you look at it."

He shuffled out quickly, and Mr. Clifton as quickly unfolded the paper. It was as Mr. Faber said on the list of deaths.

"On the 18th inst., Mrs. Hazel Clifton, only child of William Barrington, of the Barrington estate."

Clients called. Mr. Clifton's bell did not ring; an hour or two passed, and Faber protested that Mr. Clifton was engaged, until he could protest no longer. He went in deprecatingly. Mr. Clifton sat yet with the newspaper before him and the letters unopened at his elbow. His eye had caught sight of the account of the dreadful railroad disaster. First in the list of those who had met with the most horrible death was that of his poor unhappy wife.

"There's one or two who will come in, Mr. Clifton, who will see you. What am I to say?"

Mr. Clifton stared at him for a moment as if his thoughts had been in the next world. Then he swept the newspaper from before him, and was the calm, collected man of business again.

Captain St. Clare, the sly fox, had not retired when Mr. Clifton came home that fatal night, and whatever put it into his mind, unless it was the helper of all evil, he went out and walked in the park and smoked his cigar. He was not long there when he gave a low whistle of surprise. He saw Hazel stealing out of the gates into the main road; he saw also that she carried a small traveling-bag. He knew, in an instant, that she was making for the depot. He could see clearly what was up, and it took him but a second to make up his mind what to do.

He hurried into the house and gathered his belongings together, and started off in hot haste after Hazel. He arrived just in time to see Hazel get on the train. It was not his intention to let her see him until he saw her get off the train, at whatever station it might be.

It was evident that his day had not come yet; for he escaped with only a few bruises in the horrible smash-up.

And it was thus poor Hazel had to suffer the bane of going off with that villain.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"SALLY, there's a lady asking for you," said the man-servant. "I have shown her into the gray parlor."

"A lady for me?" repeated Sally. "Who is it? Some one to see the children, perhaps?"

"It's for yourself, I think. She asked for Miss Truesdell."

Sally looked at the man, but she put down her work and proceeded to the gray parlor. A pretty woman, vain and dashing, threw up her veil at her entrance.

"Well, Sally! How are you?"

Sally, always pale, turned paler still as she gazed in blank consternation. Was it really Kate who stood before her?—Kate the erring. Kate it was. And she stood there, holding out her hand to Sally with what Cora would have called all the brass in the world. Sally could not reconcile her mind to link her own with it.

"Excuse me, Kate, but I can not take your hand. I can not welcome you here. What could have induced you to come?"

"If you are going to be upon your high heels, it seems I might as well have stayed away," was Kate's reply, given in the pert but good-humored manner she had ever used to Sally. "My hand won't damage yours. I am not poison!"

"You are looked upon in Barrington as worse than poison, Kate," returned Sally in a tone not of anger but of sorrow. "Where's Tom Osborne?"

Kate tossed her head.

"Where's who?" asked she.

"Tom Osborne. My question was plain enough."

"How should I know where he is? It's like your impudence to mention him to me. Why don't you ask me where Old Nick is, and how he does? I'd rather own acquaintance with him than with Tom Osborne, if I'd only my choice between the two?"

"Then you have left Tom Osborne? How long since?"

"I have left—what do you say?" broke off Kate, whose lips were quivering ominously with suppressed passion.

“Perhaps you’ll condescend to explain. I don’t understand.”

“When you left here, Kate, did you not go after Tom Osborne?—did you not join him?”

“I’ll tell you what it is, Sally,” flashed Kate, her face indignant and her voice passionate. “I have put up with some things from you in my time, but human nature has its limits of endurance, and I won’t bear that. I have never set eyes on Tom Osborne since that night of horror. I wish I could, I’d help to hang him.”

Sally paused. The belief that Kate was with him had been long and deeply imbued within her; it was the long continued and firm conviction of all Barrington, and a settled belief such as that is not easily shaken. Was Kate telling her the truth? She knew her propensity for making false statements when they served to excuse herself.

“Kate,” she said, at length, “let me understand you. When you left this place, was it not to share Tom Osborne’s flight? Have you not been living with him?”

“No,” burst forth Kate, with kindling eyes. “Living with him! with our father’s murderer! Shame upon you, Sally Truesdell! you must be precious wicked yourself to suppose it.”

“If I have judged you wrongly, Kate, I sincerely beg your pardon. Not only myself, but the whole of Barrington believed you were with him, and the thought has caused me pain night and day.”

“What a cannibal-minded set you must all be, then!” was Kate’s indignant rejoinder.

“Not one in the place but thought so, with the exception of Mr. Clifton,” proceeded Sally. “He has said two or three times to me that he should not think you went to Tom Osborne, or were living with him.”

“Mr. Clifton has more sense than all Barrington put together,” complacently observed Kate. “Living with Tom Osborne! Why, I’d rather go and live with a scalping red Indian!”

“But, Kate, where did you go then? Why did you leave at all?”

“Never mind why. It was not to be supposed that I could stop at home in the cottage, with ghosts and dreams, and all those sort of things that attend a place where a murder has been committed.”

“What have you been doing ever since? Where have you been?”

“Never mind,” repeated Kate. “You have not been so complimentary to me, it appears, that I need put myself out of my way to satisfy your curiosity. I was knocking about at first, but I soon settled down as steady as you.”

“Are you married?” inquired Sally, noting the word “settled.”

“Catch me marry,” retorted Kate; “I like my liberty too well. Not but what I might be induced to change my condition if anything out of the way eligible occurred; it must be very eligible, though, to tempt me. I am what I suppose you call yourself—a lady’s-maid.”

“Indeed!” said Sally, much relieved. “And are you comfortable, Kate—are you in a good place?”

“Middling for that. The pay is good, but there’s a great deal to do, and my lady is a Tartar. What on earth could have induced you to fancy I should go off with that Tom Osborne?” she added, for she could not forget the grievance.

“Look at the circumstances,” argued Sally. “You both disappeared.”

“But not together.”

“Nearly together. There were only a few days intervening. And you had neither money nor friends.”

“You don’t know what I had. But I would rather have died of want on my father’s grave than have shared his means,” continued Kate, growing passionate again. “And you ought to have made sure of that.”

“If you had but dropped me a line, Kate, it would have put a different aspect upon the whole affair. Your silence helped me to misjudge you.”

“Misjudge me, indeed! Why, I never cared for Tom Osborne! He was not the kind I fancied.”

“You encouraged him to the house.”

“Well, I don’t deny it. Had I known he was to turn out what he did, I would have had nothing to do with him. Where is he? Not hung, or I should have heard of it.”

“He has never been seen since that night, Kate.”

“Nor heard of?”

“Nor heard of. Most people think he is in Australia or some other foreign land.”

“The best place for him. The more distance he puts be-

tween him and home, the better. If he ever does come back, I hope he'll get his deserts—which is a rope's-end. I'd go to his hanging!"

"You are as bitter against him as his father. He would bring his son back to suffer if he could."

"A cross-grained old camel!" remarked Kate, in allusion to the qualities, social and amiable, of the judge. "I don't defend Tom Osborne—I hate him too much for that—but if his father had treated him differently Tom might have been different. Well, let's talk of something else. The subject invariably gives me the shivers. Who is mistress here?"

"Miss Clifton."

"Oh! I might have guessed that. Is she as fierce as ever?"

"There is little alteration in her."

"And there won't be on this side of the grave. Sally, I don't want to encounter her. She never liked me."

"You need not fear meeting her. She is away—gone to Hillsdale for a week's visit."

"That's good news. Then, who acts as mistress while she's absent?"

"I give the orders," said Sally. "Mr. Clifton interferes very little."

"Is Mr. Clifton at home?"

"He will be home to dinner. I dare say you would like some dinner; you shall come and have it with me and Cora in the nursery."

"I was thinking you might have the grace to offer me something," said Kate. "I intend to stop till to-morrow in the neighborhood. Don't stare at me in that blank way, as if you feared I should ask to sleep here. I am already provided for."

"I did not have such a thought, Kate. Come and take your hat off."

"Is the nursery full of children?"

"There is only one child in it. Miss Ethel and Master Frank are with the governess."

Cora received Kate with lofty condescension, having Tom Osborne in her thoughts. But Sally explained that it was all a misapprehension—that her sister had not been near Tom Osborne, but was as indignant against him as they were. Upon which Cora grew cordial and chatty, rejoicing

in the delightful recreation her tongue would enjoy that evening.

Kate's account of herself as to past proceedings was certainly not the most satisfactory in the world; but altogether, taking in the present, it was so vast an improvement upon Sally's conclusions that she had not felt so elated for many a day. When Mr. Clifton returned home Sally sought him and acquainted him with what had happened: that Kate had come, was maid to a very nice lady, and, above all, "that she had never been with Tom Osborne."

"Ah! you remember what I said, Sally," he remarked. "That I did not believe Kate was with Tom?"

"I have been telling Kate so, sir, and she says that you have got more sense than all Barrington put together."

Mr. Clifton laughed.

"Does she seem steady, Sally?"

"I think so, sir—steady for her. Have you any objections to her staying all night with me, sir?"

"None at all, Sally," replied Mr. Clifton. "Let her remain."

Later in the evening, after Mr. Clifton's dinner, a message came that Kate was to go to him. Accordingly she proceeded to his presence.

"So, Kate, you have returned to let Barrington know that you are alive. Sit down."

"Barrington may go walking in future, sir, for all the heed I shall take of it!" retorted Kate. "A set of wicked-minded scandal-mongers, to say I had gone off after Tom Osborne!"

"You should not have gone off at all, Kate."

"Well, sir, that was my business, and I chose to go. I could not stay in the cottage after that night's work."

"There's a mystery attached to that night's work, Kate," observed Mr. Clifton—"a mystery that I can not fathom. Perhaps you can help me out."

"What mystery, sir?" returned Kate.

Mr. Clifton leaned forward, his arms on the table. Kate had taken a chair at the other end of it.

"Who was it that committed the murder?" he demanded, in a grave and somewhat imperative tone.

Kate stared some moments before she replied, evidently astonished at the question.

“Who committed the murder, sir?” she uttered, at length. “Tom Osborne committed it. Everybody knows that.”

“Did you see it done?”

“No,” replied Kate. “If I had seen it, the fright and horror would have killed me. Tom Osborne quarreled with my father, and drew the gun upon him in his passion.”

“You assume this to be the case, Kate, as others have assumed it. I do not think it was Tom Osborne who killed your father.”

“Not Tom Osborne!” exclaimed Kate, after a pause.

“Then who do you think did it, sir? I?”

“Nonsense, Kate!”

“I know he did it,” proceeded Kate. “It is true that I did not see it done, but I know it, for all that. I know it, sir!”

“You can not know it, Kate.”

“I do know it, sir; I would not assert it to you if I did not. If Tom Osborne were here present before us, and swore till he was black in the face that it was not he, I could convict him.”

“By what means?”

“I had rather not say, sir. But you may believe me, for I am speaking the truth.”

“There was another friend of yours present that evening, Kate—Captain Tilford.”

Kate’s face turned crimson; she was evidently confused. But Mr. Clifton’s speech and manner were authoritative, and she saw that it would be useless to attempt to trifle with him.

“I know he was, sir. A young man who used to ride some evenings to see me. He had nothing to do with what occurred.”

“Where did he ride from?”

“He was stopping with some friends at Hillsdale. He was nobody, sir.”

“What was his name?” questioned Mr. Clifton.

“Tilford,” said Kate.

“I mean his real name. Tilford was an assumed name.”

“Oh, dear, no!” returned Kate. “Tilford was his name.”

Mr. Clifton paused and looked at her.

"Kate, I have reason to believe that Tilford was only an assumed name. Now, I have a motive for wishing to know his real one, and you would very much oblige me by confiding it to me. What is it?"

"I don't know that he had any other name. I am sure he had no other," persisted Kate. "He was Captain Tilford."

"You have seen him since?"

"Once in awhile we have met."

"Where is he now?"

"Now? Oh, my goodness, I don't know anything about him now!" said Kate. "I have not heard of him or seen him for a long while. I think I heard something about his going to France."

"Kate, do you know anything of his family?"

Kate shook her head.

"I don't think he has any. I never heard him mention so much as a brother or sister."

"And you persist in saying his name was Tilford?"

"I persist in it because it was his name. I am positive it was his name."

"Kate, shall I tell you why I want to find him? I believe it was he who murdered your father."

Kate's eyes and mouth gradually opened, and her face turned hot and cold alternately. Then passion mastered her, and she burst forth:

"It's a lie! I beg your pardon, sir, but whoever told you that told you a lie. Tilford had no more to do with it than I had. I'll swear to it!"

"Kate, I tell you I believe Tilford to have been the man. You were not present; you can not know who actually did it."

"Yes, I can, and do know," said Kate, bursting into tears of hysterical passion. "Tilford was with me when it happened; so it could not have been Tilford. It was that wicked Tom Osborne. Have I not said that I'll swear to it?"

"Tilford was with you at the moment of the murder?" repeated Mr. Clifton.

"Yes, he was," shrieked Kate, nearly beside herself with emotion. "Whoever has been trying to put it off Tom Osborne and on to him is a wicked, false-hearted

wretch! It was Tom Osborne, and nobody else, and I hope he'll be hung for it yet!"

"You are telling me the truth, Kate?" said Mr. Clifton.

"Truth!" echoed Kate, flinging up her hands. "Would I tell a lie over my poor father's death? If Tilford had done it, would I screen him or put it on Tom Osborne? No, no!"

Mr. Clifton felt uncertain and bewildered. That Kate was sincere in what she said was too apparent. He spoke again; but Kate had risen from her chair to leave.

"Clarke was in the woods that evening, Gurdy Hood was in it. Could either of them have been the culprit?"

"No, sir!" firmly retorted Kate; "the culprit was Tom Osborne, and I'd say it with my last breath; I'd say it because I know it, though I don't choose to say how I know it. Time enough when he gets taken."

She quitted the room, leaving Mr. Clifton in a state of puzzled bewilderment. Was he to believe Kate, or was he to believe the assertion of Tom Osborne?

CHAPTER XXVII.

IN one of the comfortable sitting-rooms of the Barrington estate sat Mr. Clifton and sister one very stormy night in January. The contrast within and without was great. The warm, blazing fire in the grate, the handsome carpet on which it flickered, the exceedingly comfortable arrangement of the furniture of the room altogether, and the light of the chandelier which fell on all, presented a picture of home peace, though it may not have deserved the name of luxury.

Without, heavy flakes of snow were falling thickly, rendering the atmosphere so dense and obscure that a man could not see a yard before him. Mr. Clifton had driven home in the pony-carriage, and the snow had so settled upon him, even in that short time, that Ethel, who happened to see him as he entered the hall, screamed out laughingly that her papa had turned into a white man.

It was now later in the evening; the children were in bed, and the house was quiet. Mr. Clifton was deeply in the pages of the monthly periodicals, and Miss Clifton sat

on the other side of the fire, grumbling and grunting and sniffing.

Miss Clifton was one of your strong-minded ladies who never condescend to be ill. Of course, had she been attacked with scarlet fever, or paralysis, or St. Vitus's dance, she must have given in to the enemy; but trifling ailments, such as headache, influenza, sore throat, which other people get, passed by her.

Imagine, therefore, her exasperation at finding her head stuffed up, her chest sore, and her voice gone. For once in her life she had caught cold.

"What's the time, I wonder?" exclaimed Miss Clifton.

Mr. Clifton looked at his watch.

"It is just nine."

"Then I think I shall go to bed. I'll have a bowl of arrowroot or gruel, or some slop of that sort, after I'm in it. I'm sure I have been free enough all my life from requiring such sick-dishes."

"Do so," said Mr. Clifton. "It may do you good."

"There is one thing excellent for a cold in the head, I know. It's to double your flannel petticoat crossways, or any other large piece of flannel you may conveniently have at hand, and put it on over your night-cap. I'll try it."

"I would," said Mr. Clifton, smothering an irreverent laugh.

She sat on five minutes longer, and then left, wishing Mr. Clifton good-night. He resumed his reading. But another page or two concluded the article, upon which Mr. Clifton threw the book on the table, arose, and stretched himself as if tired of sitting. He stirred the fire into a brighter blaze, and stood on the hearth-rug.

"I wonder if it snows yet?" he said to himself.

Proceeding to the window, one of those which opened to the ground, he drew aside the half of the warm, crimson curtain. It all looked dull and dark outside.

Mr. Clifton could see little what the weather was, and he opened the window and stepped half out.

The snow was falling faster and thicker than ever. Not at that did Mr. Clifton start with surprise, if not with a more unpleasant sensation, but at feeling a man's hand touch his, and finding a man's face nearly in contact with his own.

"Let me come in, Mr. Clifton, for the love of life! I

see you are alone. I'm dead beat, and I don't know but I'm dogged also."

The tone struck familiarly on Mr. Clifton's ear. He drew back mechanically; a thousand perplexing sensations overwhelmed him, and the man followed him into the room—a white man, as Ethel had called her father. Ay, for he had been hours and hours on foot in the snow; his hat, his clothes, his eyebrows, his large whiskers, all were white.

"Lock the door, please!" were his first words.

Need you be told that it was Tom Osborne?

Mr. Clifton fastened the window, drew the heavy curtains across it, and turned rapidly to lock the two doors. For there were two to the room, one of them leading into the adjoining one. Tom, meanwhile, took off his wet coat, his hat, and his false black whiskers, wiping the snow from the latter with his hand.

"Tom," uttered Mr. Clifton, "I am thunder-struck. I fear you have done wrong to come here!"

"I cut off from New York at a moment's notice," replied Tom, who was literally shivering with cold. "I'm dogged, Mr. Clifton; the detectives are after me, set on by that wretch Tilford."

Mr. Clifton turned to the sideboard and poured out some brandy.

"Drink it, Tom; it will warm you."

"I'd rather have it in some hot water."

"But how am I to get the hot water brought in? Drink this now. Why, how you tremble!"

"A few hours outside in that cold snow is enough to make the strongest man tremble. And it lies so deep in some places. But I'll tell you about this business. A fortnight ago I was at a cab-stand talking to a cab-driver, when some drops of snow came down. A gentleman and lady were passing at the time, but I had not paid any attention to them. I heard him exclaim to her, 'I think we are going to have a storm. We had better take a cab, my dear.' With that the man I was talking to swung open the door of his cab, and she got in—such a fair, young girl! I turned to look at him, and you might have knocked me down with astonishment, Mr. Clifton. It was the man Tilford!"

"Indeed!"

"You thought I might be mistaken in him that moonlight night; but there was no mistaking him in broad daylight. I looked him full in the face, and he looked at me. He turned as white as a cloth; perhaps I did—I don't know."

"Was he well dressed?"

"Very. Oh! there's no mistaking his position. That he moves in the high circles, there's no doubt. The cab drove away, and I got up behind it. The driver thought boys were there, and turned his head and his whip, but I made him a sign. We didn't go much more than a block. I was on the sidewalk before Tilford was, and looked at him again, and again he went white. I marked the house, thinking it was where he lived, and—and—"

"Why did you not give him into custody, Tom?"

Tom shook his head.

"And my proofs of his guilt, Mr. Clifton? I could bring none against him; no positive ones. No, I must wait till I can get proofs to do that. He would turn round upon me now, and swear my life away to render his secure; perhaps testify that he saw me commit the murder. Well, I thought I'd ascertain for certain what his name was, and that night I went to the house and got into conversation with one of the servants who was standing at the door.

"Does Captain Tilford live here?" I asked him.

"Mr. Lake lives here," said he; "I don't know any Captain Tilford."

"Then that's his name, thought I to myself.

"A youngish man, isn't he?" said I; "very smart, with a pretty wife?"

"I don't know what you call youngish," he laughed.

"Well, Mr. Clifton, I could get at nothing satisfactory; the fellow said that the gentleman that owned the house was just up from a long illness, and a good many people came to see him. 'He was sixty years or more, and there were no young people living there except the servants.'"

"Is this all, Tom?"

"All? I wish it had been all. I kept looking about for him in all the best streets. I was half mad."

"Do you not wonder, if he is in this position of life and resides in New York, that you have never dropped upon him previously?" interrupted Mr. Clifton.

"No, sir; and I'll tell you why: I have been afraid to

show myself in those better parts of the city, fearing I might meet with some one I used to know at home who would recognize me; so I have kept mostly in secure places. I had gone to the upper part of the city this day on a matter of business."

"Well, go on with your story."

"In a week's time I came upon him again. He was coming out of the Fifth Avenue Theater, and I went up and stood before him.

" 'What do you want, fellow?' he asked. 'I have seen you watching me before this.'

" 'I want to know your name,' I said; 'that's enough for me at present.'

"He flew into a fierce passion, and swore that if ever he caught sight of me near him again he would hand me over into custody.

" 'And, remember, men are not given into custody for watching others,' he significantly added. 'I know you, and if you have any regard for yourself, you'll keep out of my way.'

"He got into a grand private carriage as he spoke, and drove away."

"When do you say this happened?"

"A week ago. Well, I could not rest; I was half mad. I went about, still trying to discover his name, and who he was. I did come upon him once; but he was walking quickly, arm in arm with another gentleman. Again I saw him standing at the entrance to the park, talking to the same gentleman, and his face turned savage—I believe with fear as much as with anger—when he saw me. He seemed to hesitate, and then, as if he acted in a passion, suddenly beckoned to a policeman, pointed me out, and said something to him in a fast tone. That frightened me, and I slipped away. Two hours later, when I was in quite a different part of the town, in turning my head I saw the same policeman following me. I bolted under the horses of a passing vehicle, cut into some turnings and passages, through into another street, and got up beside a cabman, who was on his box driving fast. I reached my lodgings in safety, as I thought; but, happening to glance into the street, there I saw the policeman again, standing opposite and reconnoitering the house. I had gone home hungry, but this took all my hunger away from me. I opened the

box where I kept my disguise, put it on, and got out by a back way. I have been pretty nearly on my feet ever since, coming here; I only got a ride now and then."

"But, Tom, do you know that Barrington is the very worst place you could have flown to? It has come to light that you were here before, disguised as a farm laborer."

"Who the deuce betrayed that?" ejaculated Tom.

"I am unable to tell; I can not even imagine. The rumor was rife in the place, and it reached your father's ears. That rumor may make people's wits sharper to know your disguise than they otherwise might have been."

"But what was I to do? I was forced to come here first, to get a little money. I shall fix myself up in some other disguise, and go to a large city, far away from New York, and see what employment I can get into; but I must have something to live upon till I get it. I don't possess a penny," he added. "The last coppers I had I spent in bread and cheese at midday. I have been outside that window for more than an hour."

"Indeed?"

"As I neared Barrington I began to think what I should do. It was of no use trying to catch Lulu's attention on a night like this; I had no money to pay for a lodging; so I turned off here, hoping by good luck to drop upon you. There was a little part in this window curtain; it had not been drawn close, and through it I could see you and Miss Clifton. I saw her leave the room; I saw you come to the window and open it, and then I spoke. Mr. Clifton," he added, after a pause, "is this sort of life to go on with me as long as I live?"

"I am deeply sorry for you, Tom," was the sympathizing answer. "I wish I could remedy it."

Before another word was spoken the room door was tried, and then gently knocked at. Mr. Clifton placed his hand on Tom, who was looking scared out of his wits.

"Be still; be at ease, Tom; no one shall come in. It is only John."

Not John's voice, however, but Sally's was heard in response to Mr. Clifton's demand of who was there.

"Miss Clifton has left her handkerchief down-stairs, sir, and has sent me to get it."

"You can not come in; I am busy," was the answer, delivered in a clear and most decisive tone.

"Who was it?" quivered Tom, as Sally was heard going away.

"It was Sally."

"What, is she here still? Has anything ever been heard of Kate?"

"Kate was here herself two or three months ago."

"Was she?" said Tom, beguiled for an instant from the thought of his own danger. "What is she doing?"

"She is in service as lady's-maid. Tom, I questioned Kate about Tilford. She protested solemnly to me that it was not Tilford who committed the deed; that it could not have been he, for Tilford was with her at the moment of its being done."

"It's not true," said Tom. "It was Tilford."

"Tom, you can not tell; you did not see it done."

"I know that no man could have rushed out in that frantic manner, with those signs of fear and guilt about him, unless he had been engaged in a bad deed," was Tom Osborne's answer. "It could have been no one else."

"Kate declares he was with her," repeated Mr. Clifton.

"Look here, sir; you are a sharp man, and folks say I am not, but I can see things, and draw my reasonings as well as they can, perhaps. If Tilford was not Truesdell's murderer, why should he be persecuting me? What would he care about me? And why should his face turn livid, as it has done each time he has seen my eyes on him? Whether he committed the murder, or whether he didn't, he must know that I did not, because he came upon me waiting as he was tearing from the cottage."

Tom's reasoning was not bad.

"Another thing," he reasoned. "Kate swore at the inquest that she was alone when the deed was done; that she was alone in the woods at the back of the cottage, and knew nothing about it until afterward. How could she have sworn she was alone if Tilford was with her?"

The facts had entirely escaped Mr. Clifton's memory in his conversation with Kate, or he would not have failed to point out the discrepancy, and to inquire how she could reconcile it. Yet her assertion to him had been most positive and solemn. There were difficulties in the matter which he could not reconcile.

"Now that I have got over my love for Kate, I can see

her faults, Mr. Clifton. She'd no more stop at an untruth than she'd stop—"

A most awful thundering at the room door, loud enough to bring the very house down. No officers of justice, searching for a fugitive, ever made a louder. Tom, whose face turned to a chalk white, his eyes starting, and his light hair bristling with horror, struggled into his wet coat after a fashion, the tail up above his ears and the sleeves hanging, forced his hat on and his false whiskers, looking round in a bewildering manner for some closet or mouse-hole into which he might creep.

"Tom, be a man; put aside this weakness, this fear. Have I not told you that harm shall not come near you in my house?"

"It may be an officer from New York; he may have brought half a dozen more with him," gasped the unhappy Tom. "I said they may have dogged me all the way here."

"Nonsense! Sit down and be at rest. It is only my sister, and she will be as anxious to shield you from danger as I."

"Is it?" cried the relieved Tom. "Can't you make her keep out?" he continued, his teeth still chattering.

"No, that I can not, if she has a mind to come in," was the candid answer. "You remember what she was Tom; she is not altered."

Knowing that to speak on this side of the door to his sister, when she was in one of her resolute moods, would be of no manner of use, Mr. Clifton opened the door, dexterously swung himself through it, and shut it after him. There she stood in a fierce passion.

Sally returned to Miss Clifton, and said she could not go into the room, for the door was locked, and Mr. Clifton called out he was busy.

Food for Miss Clifton. She, feeling sure that no visitor had come to the house, ran her thoughts rapidly over the members of the household, and came to the conclusion that it must be the governess, Miss Lee, who had dared to closet herself with Mr. Clifton. This unlucky governess was pretty, and Miss Clifton had been cautious to keep her and her prettiness very much out of her brother's sight. She knew the attraction he would present to her vision, or to those of any other unprovided-for governess. Oh, yes! it

was Miss Lee; she had stolen in believing she, Miss Clifton, was safe for the night; but she'd just unearth my lady! And what could possess Harold to lock the door? Looking round for something warm to throw over her shoulders, and catching up an article that looked as much like a green-baize table-cover as anything else, and throwing it on, down stalked Miss Clifton. And in this trim Mr. Clifton beheld her when he came out.

"Who have you got in that room?" she curtly asked.

"It is some one on business," was his prompt reply.

"Fannie, you can not go in."

She very nearly laughed.

"Not go in?"

"Indeed it is much better that you should not. Pray go back. You will make your cold worse standing there."

"Now, I want to know whether you are not ashamed of yourself?" she deliberately pursued. "You, a married man, with children in your house? I'd rather have believed anything downright wicked of myself than of you, Harold."

Miss Clifton stared considerably.

"Come, I'll have her out. And out of this house she tramps to-morrow morning! A couple of audacious ones, to be in there with the door locked, the moment you thought you had got rid of me! Stand aside, I say, Harold; I will enter!"

Mr. Clifton never felt more inclined to laugh. And to Miss Clifton's exceeding discomposure she at this juncture saw the governess emerge from the gray parlor, glance at the hall clock, and retire again.

"Why! she's there!" she uttered. "I thought she was with you."

"Miss Lee locked in with me! Is that the idea, Fannie? I think your cold has obscured your reason."

"Well, I shall go in, all the same. I tell you, Harold, that I will see who is there."

"If you persist in going in, you must go. But allow me to warn you that you will find tragedy in that room, not comedy. There is no woman in it; but there is a man; a man who came in through the window like a hunted stag; a man upon whom a ban is set, and who fears the police are upon his track. Can you guess who?"

It was Fannie's turn to stare now. She opened her dry lips to speak, but they closed again.

"It is Tom Osborne. There's not a roof in the world open to him this bitter night."

She said nothing. A long pause of dismay, and then she motioned to have the door opened.

"You will not show yourself in that plight?"

"Not show myself in this plight to Tom Osborne, whom I have whipped—when he was a child—ten times a day! Stand on ceremony with him! I dare say he looks no better than I do. But it's nothing short of madness, Harold, for him to come here."

He left her to enter, telling her to lock the door as soon as she got inside, and went into the adjoining room, which, by another door, opened to the one Tom was in. There he rang the bell. It was answered by the footman.

"Send John to me."

"Lay supper here, John, for two," began Mr. Clifton when the old servant appeared. "A person is with me on business. What have you in the house?"

"There's some cold roast beef, sir, and some home-made pork pies."

"That will do," said Mr. Clifton. "Put a pot of hot coffee on the table, and everything likely to be wanted. And then every one can go to bed. We will be late. Oh—and John—none of you must come near the rooms, this or the next, under any pretense whatever, unless I ring, for I shall be too busy to be disturbed."

"Very well, sir. Shall I serve the ham also?"

"The ham?"

"I beg pardon, sir. I guessed it might be Mr. Faber, and he is so fond of our hams."

"Ah, you were always a shrewd guesser, John. He is fond of ham, I know. Yes, you may put it on the table."

The consequence of which little *finesse* on Mr. Clifton's part was that John had announced in the kitchen that Mr. Faber had arrived, and supper was to be served for two.

"But what a night for the old gentleman to have trudged through on foot!"

"And what a trudge he'll have of it back again, for it'll be worse then!" chimed in one of the maids.

When Mr. Clifton got back to the other room his sister and Tom had scarcely finished staring at each other.

"Please lock the door, Miss Clifton," began shivering Tom.

"The door's locked," snapped she. "But what on earth brought you here, Tom? You must be worse than mad. Are you going to dance a hornpipe through the streets of Barrington to-morrow, and show yourself?"

"Not if I can help it," said poor Tom.

"You might just as well do that, if you come to Barrington at all, for you can't be here now without being found out."

"The life I lead is dreadful," cried Tom, "to be in exile, banned, disgraced, afraid to show myself in broad daylight amid my fellow-men, in dread every hour that the sword may fall! I would almost as soon be dead as continue to live it."

"Well, you have got nobody to grumble at; you brought it upon yourself," philosophically returned Miss Clifton as she opened the door to admit her brother. "And where are you going to lodge to-night?" asked Miss Clifton.

"I don't know," was the broken-spirited answer sighed forth. "If I lay myself down in a snow-drift, and am found frozen in the morning, it won't be of much moment."

"Was that what you thought of doing?" returned Miss Clifton.

"No," he wildly said. "What I had thought of doing was to ask Mr. Clifton for the loan of a little money, and then I can get a bed. I know a place where I will be in safety, two or three miles from here."

"Tom, I would not turn a dog out on such a night as this," impulsively uttered Mr. Clifton. "You must stop here."

"Indeed, I don't see how he is to get up to a bedroom; or how a room is to be made ready for him, for the matter of that, without betraying his presence to the servants," snapped Miss Clifton. And poor Tom laid his aching head upon his hands.

But now Miss Clifton's manner was more in fault than her heart. Will it be believed that before speaking the above ungracious words, before Mr. Clifton had touched upon the subject, she had been casting about in her busy mind for the best plan for Tom, how he could be accommodated.

"One thing is certain," she resumed: "that it will be impossible for you to sleep here without it being known to Sally. And I suppose you are on the friendly terms of drawn daggers with Sally, for she believes you were the murderer of her father."

"Allow me to see her and convince her. Mr. Clifton, why did you not tell Sally better?"

"There's that small room at the back of mine," said Miss Clifton, returning to the practical part of the subject. "He might sleep there, but Sally must be taken into confidence."

"Sally had better come in," said Mr. Clifton. "I will say a word or two to her first."

He unlocked the door and quitted the room. Miss Clifton, as jealously locking it again, called to Sally, and beckoned her into the adjoining apartment. He knew that Sally's belief in the guilt of Tom Osborne was confirmed and strong; but he must uproot that belief if Tom was to sleep in his house all night.

"Sally," he began, "you remember how thoroughly imbued you were with the belief that Kate went off after Tom Osborne? I several times expressed my doubts upon the point; the fact was, I had positive information that she was not with him, and never had been, though I considered it expedient to keep my information to myself. You are convinced now that she was not with him?"

"Of course I am, sir."

"Well, you see, Sally, that my opinion would have been worth listening to. Now, I am going to shake your belief upon another point, and if I assure you that I have equally good grounds for doing so, you will believe me?"

"I am quite certain, sir, that you would state nothing but what is true; and I know your judgment is sound."

"Then I must tell you that I do not believe it was Tom Osborne who murdered your father."

"Sir!" uttered Sally, amazed out of her senses.

"I believe Tom Osborne to be as innocent of the murder as you or I," he deliberately repeated. "I have held grounds for this opinion for many years."

"Then, sir, who did do it?"

"Kate's other lover. That dandy fellow—Tilford, as I truly believe."

"And you say you have grounds, sir?"

“ Good grounds; and I tell you I have been in possession of them for years. I would like you to think as I do.”

“ But, sir, if Tom was innocent, why did he run away and keep away?”

“ Ah, why, indeed! It is that which has done the mischief. His own weak cowardice was his fault; he feared to come back, and he felt that he could not remove the odium of circumstances. Sally, I should like you to see him and hear his story.”

“ There is not much chance of that, sir. I dare say he will never venture here again.”

“ He is here now.”

Sally looked up considerably startled.

“ Here in this house,” repeated Mr. Clifton. “ He has taken shelter in it, and for the few hours that he will remain we must extend our hospitality and protection to him, concealing him in the best manner we can. I thought it well that this confidence should be reposed in you, Sally. Come now, and see him.”

Considering that it was a subdued interview—the voices subdued, I mean—it was a confused one. Tom talked vehemently, Sally asking question after question, Miss Clifton’s tongue going as fast as theirs. The only silent one was Mr. Clifton. Sally could not refuse to believe protestations so solemn, and her suspicions veered round upon Captain Tilford.

“ And now about the bed,” interjected Miss Clifton, impatiently. “ Where’s he to sleep, Sally? The only safe room that I know of will be the one through mine.”

“ He can’t sleep there, ma’am. Don’t you know that the key of the door was lost last week, and we can’t open it?”

“ So much the better. He’ll be all the safer.”

“ But how is he to get in?”

“ To get in? Why, through my room, of course. Does mine not open to it, stupid?”

“ Oh, well, ma’am, if you would like him to go through yours that’s different.”

“ Why shouldn’t he go through? Do you suppose I mind young Tom Osborne? Not I, indeed,” she irascibly continued. “ I only wish he was young enough for me to flog him as I used to do, that’s all. He deserves it as much as anybody ever did, playing the fool, as he has done, in all ways. I shall be in bed with the curtains down; and

his passing through won't harm him. Standing on ceremony with Tom Osborne! What next, I wonder?"

This point being settled, Sally went to put the sheets upon the bed, and Miss Clifton returned to her own. Mr. Clifton, meanwhile, took Tom into supper, and fed him plentifully, and made him comfortable. Under the influence of the good cheer, the good fire, and the hot glass of brandy and water which wound up the entertainment, Tom fell asleep in his chair. Not five minutes had he slept, however, when he started up wild and haggard, beating off, as it were, some imaginary assailant.

"It was not I!" he uttered, fearfully and passionately. "It is of no use to take me, for it was not I. It was another; he who—"

"Tom! Tom!" soothingly said Mr. Clifton.

Tom cast his bewildered eyes on the supper-table, the fire, on Mr. Clifton, all reassuring objects to look upon.

"I declare, I dreamed that they had grabbed me. What stupid things dreams are!"

At this moment there came a gentle knock at the door, and Mr. Clifton opened it. It was Sally.

"The room is ready, sir," she whispered, "and everybody is in bed."

"Then, now is your time, Tom. Good-night."

He stole upstairs after Sally, who piloted him through the room of Miss Clifton. Nothing could be seen of that lady, though something might be heard. One given to truth more than politeness might have called it snoring.

Sally showed Tom his room, and closed the door upon him.

Poor hunted Tom! Good-night to you!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MORNING dawned. The same dull weather, the same heavy fall of snow. Miss Clifton took her breakfast in bed, an indulgence she had not favored for ever so many years. Tom arose, but remained in his room, and Sally carried his breakfast in to him.

Mr. Clifton entered while he was taking it.

"How did you sleep, Tom?"

"I slept well, I was so dead tired. What am I to do

next, Mr. Clifton? The sooner I get away from this, the better. I can't feel safe."

"You must not think of it before evening. I am aware that you can remain here only for a few hours, as it would become known to the servants. It is difficult to me, Tom, to believe that this Captain Tilford is in the class of life you speak of," observed Mr. Clifton. "For to one in his class of life, the bare suspicion of such a crime brought against him would crush him forever in the eyes of his compeers."

"There's no doubt about it; there's none, indeed. But that I did not much like to mention the name—for it can't be a pleasant name to you—I should have said last night who I have seen him walking with," said Tom.

Mr. Clifton looked inquiringly.

"Say on, Tom."

"I have seen him twice with Captain St. Clare. Once he was talking to him at the door of the pool-room, and once they were walking arm in arm. They are apparently upon intimate terms."

At this moment a loud, bustering, angry voice was heard calling from the stairs, and Tom leaped up as if he had been shot. His door—not the one leading to the room of Miss Clifton's—opened upon the corridor, and the voice sounded close, just as if its owner were coming in with a bound: It was the voice of Judge Osborne.

"Clifton, where are you? Here's a pretty thing happened. Come down."

Mr. Clifton for once in his life lost his calm equanimity, and sprung to the door, to keep it against invasion, as eagerly as Tom could have done. He forgot that Sally had said the door was safely locked and the key mislaid. As to Tom, he rushed on his hat and black whiskers, and hesitated between under the bed or the wardrobe.

"Don't agitate yourself, Tom," whispered Mr. Clifton. "There is no real danger. I will go and keep him safely."

But when Mr. Clifton got through his sister's bedroom he found that lady had taken the initiative, and was leaning over the balustrades, having been arrested in the process of dressing. Her clothes were on, but her night-cap was not off. Little cared she, however, who saw her night-cap.

"What on earth brings you up in this weather?" began she, in a tone of exasperation.

"I want to see Clifton. Nice news I have had."

"What about? Anything concerning Mary?"

"Mary be bothered!" replied the judge, who was certainly, from some cause, in a furious temper. "It concerns that precious rascal whom I am forced to call son. I am told he is here."

Down the stairs leaped Mr. Clifton four at a time, wound his arm within the judge's, and led him into the sitting-room.

"Good-morning, judge. You have courage to venture up through the snow! What is the matter? You seem excited."

"Excited!" raved the judge, dancing about the room first on one leg then on the other, like a cat upon hot bricks; "so would you be excited if your life were worried out as mine is over a wicked scamp of a son. Why can't folks trouble their heads about their own business, and let my affairs alone? A pity but what he was hanged, and the thing done with!"

"But what has happened?" questioned Mr. Clifton.

"Why, this has happened!" retorted the judge, throwing a letter on the table.

Mr. Clifton took up the note and read it. It purported to be from "a friend" to Judge Osborne, informing that gentleman that his "criminal son" was likely to have arrived at Barrington or would arrive in the course of a day or so, and it recommended the judge to speed his departure from it lest he should be pounced upon.

"This letter is anonymous!" exclaimed Mr. Clifton.

"Of course it is," stamped the judge. "And I took an oath I'd deliver him up to justice if I ever could."

"You did not take an oath to go open-mouthed to the police-station, upon the receipt of any despicable anonymous letter or any foolish report, and say, 'I have news that my son will be here to-day; look after him.' Nonsense, judge; let the police look out for themselves, but don't you set them on."

The judge growled, whether in assent or dissent did not appear, and Mr. Clifton resumed.

"Have you shown this letter to Mrs. Osborne, or mentioned it to her?"

"Not I. I didn't give myself time. I had gone down to the gate to see how deep the snow lay in the road when the letter-carrier came up; so I read it as I stood there. I went in for my coat and umbrella to come off to you, and Mrs. Osborne wanted to know where I was going to in such a hurry—but I did not tell her."

"I am truly glad to hear it," said Mr. Clifton. "Such information as this could not fail to have a dangerous effect upon Mrs. Osborne. Do not suffer a hint of it to escape you, judge; consider how much anxiety she has already suffered."

"It is partly her own fault. Why can't she drive the ill-doing boy from her mind?"

"If she could," said Mr. Clifton, "she would be acting against human nature. There is one thing which you may possibly not have glanced at, judge. You speak of delivering your son up to the law. Has it ever struck you that you would be delivering up at the same time your wife's life?"

"Stuff!" said the judge.

"You would find it no stuff. So sure as Tom is brought to trial—whether through your means or through any other—so sure will it kill your wife."

The judge took up the letter which had lain open on the table, folded it, and put it in its envelope.

"I suppose you don't know the writing, Mr. Clifton?"

"I never saw it before, that I remember. Are you returning home?"

"No. I shall go on to Woodbridge's? Who can have written it?" repeated the judge. "It bears the New York postmark, you see?"

"It is too wide a speculation to enter upon."

Judge Osborne departed. Mr. Clifton watched him down the avenue, and then went up to Tom.

Miss Clifton was sitting with him.

"I thought I should have died," spoke poor Tom. "I declare, Mr. Clifton, my very blood seemed turned to water, and I thought I should have died with fright. Is he gone away all safe?"

"He is gone, and it is all safe."

"And what did he want? What did he hear of me?"

Mr. Clifton gave a brief explanation, and Tom immediately set the letter down as the work of Tilford.

“Will it be possible for me to see my mother this time?” he asked.

“I think it would be highly injudicious to let your mother know that you are here, or have been here,” was Mr. Clifton’s answer. “She would naturally be inquiring into particulars, and when she came to hear that you were pursued, she would never have another minute’s peace. You must forego the pleasure this time of seeing her, Tom.”

“And Lulu?”

“Lulu might come and stay the day with you, only—”

“Only what?” said Tom, for Mr. Clifton hesitated.

“I was thinking what a morning it is for her to come out in.”

“She would go through an avalanche—she’d wade through mountains of snow to see me,” said Tom, eagerly, “and be delighted to do it.”

“She always was a little fool,” put in Fannie.

“I know she would,” observed Mr. Clifton, in answer to Tom. “We will try and get her here.”

“She can arrange about the money I am to have just as well as my mother, could she not?”

“Yes. For Lulu is in receipt of money of her own now, and I know she would wish for nothing better than to apply some of it to you. Fannie, as an excuse for getting her here, I must say to Mrs. Osborne that you are ill, and wish Lulu to come for the day and bear you company. Shall I?”

“Say I am dead, if you like,” responded Fannie, who was in one of her cross moods.

Mr. Clifton ordered his sleigh, and drove off with John. He drew in at The Elms. Lulu and her mother were together, and looked surprised at the early visit.

“Did you want the judge, Harold? He is out. He went while the breakfast was on the table, apparently in a desperate hurry.”

“I don’t want the judge. I want Lulu. I have come to carry her off.”

“To carry off Lulu!”

“Fannie is not well; she has caught a violent cold and wishes Lulu to spend the day with her.”

“Oh, Harold, I can not leave mamma to-day. She is not well herself, and she will be so lonely without me.”

"Neither can I spare her, Harold. It is not a day for her to go out."

How could he get to say a word to Lulu alone? While he deliberated, talking on all the while to Mrs. Osborne, a servant came to the door. Mrs. Osborne arose from her seat to hold a conference at the door with her maid, and Mr. Clifton seized his opportunity.

"Lulu," he whispered, "make no opposition. You must come. What I really want you for is connected with Tom."

She looked up at him, a startled glance, and the crimson flew to her face. Mrs. Osborne returned to her seat.

"Oh, such a day!" she shivered. "I am sure Fannie can not expect Lulu."

"But Fannie does. And there is my sleigh, waiting to take her before I go to the office. Not a flake of snow can come near her, Mrs. Osborne. The large, warm apron will be up and an umbrella will shield her face. Get your things on, Lulu."

"Mamma, if you would not very much mind being left, I should like to go," said Lulu.

"But you will be sure to take cold, child."

"Oh, dear, no! I can wrap up well."

"And I will see that she comes home all right this evening," added Mr. Clifton.

In a few minutes they were seated in the sleigh. Lulu's tongue was burning to ask questions, but John sat behind them, and would have overheard. When they arrived at the estate, Mr. Clifton gave her his arm up the steps, and took her into the breakfast-room.

"Will you prepare yourself for a surprise, Lulu?"

Suspense, fear, had turned her very pale.

"Something has happened to Tom!" she gasped.

"Nothing that need agitate you. He is here!"

"Here? Where?"

"Here—upstairs. He slept here last night."

"Oh, Harold!"

"Only fancy, Lulu! I opened the window at nine last night to look at the weather, and in burst Tom. We could not let him go out again in the snow, so he slept here, in that room next to Fannie's."

"Does she know of it?"

"Of course. And Sally also; we were obliged to tell

Sally. Imagine Tom's fear! Your father came this morning, calling up the stairs after me, saying he heard Tom was here. He meant at Barrington. I thought Tom would have gone out of his mind with fright."

A few more explanations, and Mr. Clifton took Lulu to Tom's room, Miss Clifton and her knitting still keeping Tom company. In fact, that was to be the general sitting-room of the day, and a hot lunch, Tom's dinner, would be served in Miss Clifton's room at one o'clock. Sally was only admitted to wait on them.

"And now I must go," said Mr. Clifton, after chatting a few minutes. "The office is waiting for me, and my poor ponies are in the snow."

"But you'll be sure to be home early, Mr. Clifton?" said Tom. "I dare not stop here; I must be off not a moment later than six or seven."

"I will be here, Tom."

The day ended, and evening came, and the time for Tom's departure. It was again snowing heavily, though it had ceased in the middle of the day. Money for the present had been given to him, and arrangements had been discussed. Mr. Clifton insisted upon Tom's sending him his address as soon as he should own one to send, and Tom faithfully promised. He was in very low spirits, almost as bad as Lulu, who could not conceal her tears; they dropped in silence on her pretty silk dress. A large cloak of Miss Clifton's enveloping him, he was smuggled down the stairs into the room he had entered during the storm on the previous night while Mr. Clifton held the window open.

"Good-bye, Lulu dear. If ever you should be able to tell my mother of this day, say that my chief sorrow was not to see her."

"Oh, Tom!" she sobbed, broken-hearted, "good-bye!"

"Farewell, Tom," said Miss Clifton. "Don't you be fool enough to get into any more scrapes."

Last of all, he wrung the hand of Mr. Clifton. The latter went outside with him for an instant, and their leave-taking was alone.

"I must be going home," said Lulu to Mr. Clifton.

"It is half past seven, and mamma will be uneasy."

"Whenever you like, Lulu."

"But can I not walk? I am sorry to take out your ponies again, and in this storm."

Mr. Clifton laughed.

"Which would feel the storm worst—you or the ponies?"

Lulu got into the sleigh, and Mr. Clifton followed her.

"Are you coming, too?"

"I suppose I had better," he smiled, "to see that you and the ponies do not come to harm."

Lulu was crying silently. Very, very deeply did she mourn the unhappy situation, the privations of her brother. And she knew that he was one to feel them deeply. He could not battle with the world's hardships so bravely as many could have done. Mr. Clifton only detected her emotion as they were nearing her home. He leaned forward, took her hand, and held it between his.

"Don't grieve, Lulu. Bright days may be in store for Tom yet. You may go back," he said to the servants, when he alighted. "I shall walk home."

"Oh!" exclaimed Lulu, "I do think you intend to send the evening with us. Mamma will be so glad!"

Her voice showed that she was glad also. Mr. Clifton drew her hand within his arm as they walked up the path.

But Lulu had reckoned without her host. Mrs. Osborne had retired for the night; the judge had gone out, and she, feeling tired, had gone to rest. Lulu stole into her room, but found her asleep, so that it fell to Lulu to entertain Mr. Clifton.

They stood together before the large pier-glass in front of the blazing fire. Lulu was thinking over the events of the day. What Mr. Clifton was thinking of was best known to himself; his eyes, with their drooping eyelids, were cast upon Lulu. There was a long silence. At length Lulu seemed to feel that his gaze was on her, and she looked up at him.

"Will you marry me, Lulu?"

The words were spoken in the quietest, most matter-of-fact tone, just as if he said, "Shall I give you a chair, Lulu?" But, oh! the change that came over her countenance, the sudden light of joy, the scarlet flush of emotion and happiness! Then it all faded down to paleness and sadness.

She shook her head in the negative.

"But you are very kind to ask me," she added, in words.

“What is the reason, Lulu?”

Another rush of color, as before, and a deep silence.

Mr. Clifton put his arm round her, and bent his face on a level with hers.

“Whisper it to me, Lulu. Is it because I once married another?”

“No, no; it is the remembrance of that night—you can not have forgotten it; and it is stamped on my brain in letters of fire. I never thought so to betray myself. But for what passed that night you would not have asked me now.”

“Lulu!”

She glanced up at him, the tone was so painful.

“Do you know that I love you? that there is none other in the world whom I would care to marry but you? Nay, Lulu, when happiness is within our reach, let us not throw it away.”

She cried more softly, leaning upon his arm.

“Happiness? Would it be happiness for you?”

“Great and deep happiness,” he whispered.

She read the truth in his countenance, and a sweet smile illuminated her sunny features. Mr. Clifton read its signs.

“You love me as much as ever, Lulu?”

“Far more—far more!” was the murmured answer; and Mr. Clifton held her closer and drew her face to his.

Lulu’s heart was at length at rest, and she had been content to remain where she was forever.

And Tom? Had he got clear off? Tom was stealing along the road, plunging into the snow by the hedge, because it was more sheltered there than in the beaten path, when his umbrella came in contact with another umbrella. Miss Clifton had furnished it to him, not to protect his battered hat, but to protect his face from being seen by the passers-by. The umbrellas met, smash! right underneath a gas-lamp. Aside went each umbrella, and the antagonists stared at each other.

“How dare you, fellow? Can’t you see where you are going to?”

Tom thought he should have dropped. He would have given all the money his pockets held if the friendly earth had but opened and swallowed him in. Before him now, peering into his face, was his own father!

Uttering an exclamation of dismay which broke from him involuntarily, Tom sped away with the swiftness of an arrow. Did Judge Osborne recognize the tones?

It can not be said. He saw a rough, strange-looking man, with bushy-black whiskers, who was evidently scared at the sight of him.

Nevertheless, he stood still and gazed in the direction until all sounds of Tom's footsteps had died away in the distance.

Miss Clifton's cold was better the next evening; in fact, she seemed quite herself again, and Mr. Clifton introduced the subject of his marriage. It was after dinner that he began upon it.

"Fannie, when I married Hazel Barrington, you reproached me severely with having kept you in the dark."

"If you had not kept me in the dark, but consulted me, as any other Christian would, the course of events might have been wholly changed, and the wretchedness and sorrow that fell on you been spared it," fiercely interrupted Miss Clifton.

"We will leave the unhappy past," he said, "and consider the future. I was about to remark that I do not intend to fall under your displeasure for the like offense. I believe you have never wholly forgiven it."

"And never shall!" cried she, impetuously. "I did not deserve the slight."

"Therefore, almost as soon as I know it myself, I acquaint you. I am about to marry a second time, Fannie."

Miss Clifton started up. Her spectacles dropped off her nose and her knitting from her hand.

"What did you say?" she uttered, aghast.

"I am about to marry."

"You?"

"I. Is there anything so very astonishing in it?"

"For the love of common sense, don't go and make such a fool of yourself! You have done it once. Was not that enough for you? But you must run your head into the noose again."

"Now, Fannie, can you wonder that I do not speak to you of such things, when you meet me in this way? You treat me just as you did when I was a child. It is very foolish."

"I always thought you were mad when you married before, but I shall think you doubly mad now."

"Let it be who it will, Fannie, you will be sure to grumble."

"Well, can't you say who it is?" snapped Fannie.

"It is Lulu Osborne."

"Who?" shrieked Fannie.

"You are not deaf, Fannie."

"Well, you are an idiot!" she exclaimed, lifting up her hands and eyes.

"Thank you," he said, calmly.

"And so you are, Harold. To suffer that girl, who has been angling after you so long, to catch you at last!"

"She has not angled after me. Had she done so, she would probably never have been Mrs. Clifton."

"She is a little conceited minx, as vain as she is high!"

"What else have you to urge against her?"

"I would have married a girl without a slur—if I must have married," aggravatingly returned Fannie.

"Slur?"

"Slur, yes. Dear me! is it an honor to possess such a brother?"

"There is no slur upon Lulu. And the time may come when it will be taken off Tom."

Miss Clifton sniffed.

"Pigs may fly, but I never saw them try it."

"The next consideration, Fannie, is about your residence. You will go back, I presume, to your old home?"

"Go back to my own home!" she exclaimed. "I shall do nothing of the kind. I shall stay at the Barrington estate. What is to hinder me?"

Mr. Clifton shook his head.

"It can not be," he said, in a low, decisive tone.

"Who says so?" she sharply asked.

"I do. Have you forgotten that night when my lost, dead darling fled from this house? She was driven to it by your cruelty and my—I will not subject another to the chances. Two mistresses in one house do not answer—they never did, and they never will."

"Why did you not give me so much of your sentiments when I first came to the Barrington estate?" she burst forth. "I hate hypocrisy!"

"They were not my sentiments then; I possessed none,

I was ignorant upon the subject, and could I have that time to live over with the experience I now have, I would do all in my power to make amends for what I was the means of bringing on my poor, broken-hearted dead Hazel."

"You will not find a better mistress of a house than I have made you," she said, resentfully.

"I do not look for it. The tenants leave your house in March, do they not?"

"Yes, they do," snapped Miss Clifton. "But as we are on the subject of details, of ways and means, allow me to tell you that if you did what was right, you would move into that house of mine, and I will go into a smaller, as you seem to think I should poison Lulu if I remained with her. The Barrington estate is a vast deal too fine and too grand for you."

"I do not consider it so. I shall not leave the Barrington estate."

At this moment the summons of a visitor was heard.

The footman entered.

"It is Captain Tilford, sir. I have shown him into the drawing-room."

Mr. Clifton was surprised. He proceeded to the drawing-room, and Miss Clifton rang for Sally.

Strange to say, she had no thoughts of rebelling against the decree. An innate consciousness had long been hers that, should Mr. Clifton marry again, her sojourn in his house would terminate. The Barrington estate was Mr. Clifton's; she had learned that he could be firm upon occasions, and the tone of his voice had told that this was one of them.

CHAPTER XXIX.

It was a lovely morning in June, and all Barrington was astir. Barrington generally was astir in the morning, but not in the bustling manner that might be observed now. People were abroad in numbers, pressing down to St. Paul's Church, for it was the day of Mr. Clifton's marriage to Lulu Osborne.

Miss Clifton made herself into a sort of martyr. She would not go near it; fine weddings in fine churches did not suit her, she said; they could tie themselves up to-

gether fast enough without her presence. She had invited the little Cliftons and their governesses and Sally to spend the day with her; and she persisted in regarding the children as martyrs, too, in being obliged to submit to the advent of a second mother. She was back in her own house again, next door to the office, settled there for life now with her servants.

St. Paul's Church was crowded. All Barrington had flocked to see it. Those who could not get in took up their station in front as near as they could get.

Eleven o'clock, and no signs of it. The mob outside grew impatient too; some of them had been there for two hours. Hark! a sound of carriages. Yes, it was coming—the wedding-party!

Mr. Clifton was one of the first to enter the church, self-possessed and calm, noble-looking. But who comes in now, with an air as if the whole church belonged to him? An imposing, pompous man, stern and grim. It is Judge Osborne, and he leads in one whom some folks jump upon seats to get a look at.

Very lovely was Lulu in her soft white silk robes and her floating veil. Her cheeks—now blushing rosy red, now pale as the veil that shaded them—betrayed how intense was her emotion.

The bride-maids came after her with jaunty steps, vain of their important office.

Mr. Clifton was already in his place at the altar, and as Lulu neared him he advanced took her hand, and placed her on his left, and the service proceeded.

In spite of her emotion—and that it was great, scarcely to be repressed, none could doubt—Lulu made the responses bravely. Be you very sure that a woman who loves him to whom she is being united must experience this emotion.

“Wilt thou have this man to be thy wedded husband, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy state of matrimony?” spoke the clergyman. “Wilt thou obey him, and serve him, love, honor, and keep thee only unto him, as long as ye both shall live?”

“I will.” Clearly, firmly, impressively was the answer given.

The ceremony was very soon over, and Lulu the magic

ring upon her finger, and her arm within Mr. Clifton's, was led out to his carriage.

The crowd shouted and hurrahed as they caught a sight of her lovely face, but the carriage was soon clear of the crowd.

It was about a week after the wedding when one morning a bundle of weekly newspapers were sent to the hospital in which Hazel was yet prolonging her stay. She picked up one of the papers to read. It happened to be the weekly paper from Barrington, giving the full account of the magnificent wedding of Mr. Clifton, of the Barrington estate, to Miss Lulu Osborne. After the long details of the wedding and its guests, it gave a little account of Mr. Clifton's three beautiful children, and more especially of his eldest boy, a manly little fellow, but very delicate; he might live for a few years, but the chances were against him. As she finished reading, the paper fell from her hand. Had she read it in the paper, or was she in the delirium of brain fever? She sat until she could sit no longer; her very heart-strings were wrung.

"He, my husband, thinks me dead. I wonder how the tidings of my death were received at the Barrington estate?"

And she might not rise up in defense of herself.

"He has soon forgotten me!" What she had heard only increased her vain, incessant longing. A step-mother at the Barrington estate, and one of her children gliding on to death! Oh, to be with them—to see them once again!

To bed at the usual time, but not to sleep. Her frame was fevered, the bed was fevered, and she arose and paced the room. Her temples were throbbing, her heart was beating; and she once more threw herself upon the bed and pressed the pillows down upon her forehead. There is no doubt that the news of Mr. Clifton's marriage helped greatly the excitement. She did not pray to die, but she did wish that death might come to her.

What would have been the ending, it is impossible to say, but a strange turn in affairs came—one of those wonderful coincidences which are sometimes, but not often, to be met with. Hazel was known in the hospital as Mme. Septier. The head sister appeared in Mme. Septier's room after breakfast. The object of her visit was this: she felt that madame could do better than she was doing, assisting the

nurses in the hospital, and would madame accept a nice position as governess? She could introduce her to a nice family.

"Ah! my dear madame," she exclaimed, "you would be fortunate indeed if you were to get into this family. They are the nicest people; he so liked and respected, she so pretty and engaging. A most desirable position. You will be treated as a lady, and have all things comfortable. There is only one pupil, a girl; one of the little boys studies for one hour each day, but that is not much, and the salary is a very generous one. The Cliftons are friends of mine; they live at a very beautiful place—the Barrington estate."

"The Cliftons! The Barrington estate! Go governess there!"

Hazel's breath was taken away.

"I think," continued the sister, "you would be just the one to suit, and I have no doubt I could get the position for you. What do you say?"

What could she say? Her brain was in a whirl.

"I am anxious to find you one if I can," said the sister. "I have been very much pleased with you, and I should like to see you desirably placed. Shall I write to Mrs. Clifton?"

Hazel roused herself, and so far cleared her intellect as to understand and answer the question.

"Perhaps you will kindly give me until to-morrow morning to consider it?"

She had a battle with herself that day, now resolving to go and risk it, now shrinking from the attempt. At one moment it seemed to her that Providence must have placed this opportunity in her way that she might see her children in her desperate longing; at another, how could she bear to see Mr. Clifton the husband of another—to live in the same house with them, to witness his attentions, his caresses?

It might be difficult; but to see her children, her own feelings, let them be wrung as they would, should not prove an obstacle.

Evening came, and she had not decided. She passed another night of pain, of restlessness, of longing for her children. This intense longing appeared to be overmastering all her powers of mind and body. The temptation at length proved too strong; the project, having been placed

before her covetous eyes, could not be relinquished, and she finally resolved to go.

Sister Agatha wrote to Mrs. Clifton. She had met with a governess, one desirable in every way, who could not fail to suit her views precisely.

"You must not mind her appearance," went on the latter. "She is an odd-looking person, and though she can't be more than thirty, her hair is gray. But she is a lady, and with it all, Madame Septier looks one."

When this description reached the Barrington estate, Lulu laughed as she read it aloud to Mr. Clifton. He laughed also.

"It is well that governesses are not chosen according to their looks," he said, "or I fear Madame Septier would stand but a poor chance."

They resolved to engage her, and word was sent back to that effect.

A strangely wild tumult filled Hazel. She first of all hunted her desk for everything belonging to her, lest any scrap of paper, any mark on linen might be there which could give a clue to her former self. She next saw to her wardrobe, making it still more unlike anything she had formerly worn. She purchased some caps; they were simple, and fitted closely to her face. She had been learning for two years to change the character of her handwriting, and had so far succeeded that none would now take it for Hazel's. But her hand shook when she wrote to Mrs. Clifton, who had written to her. She—she writing to Mr. Clifton's wife; she who had forfeited all—husband, children, home, all—all to another, in her mad jealousy! And now writing to his wife in the capacity of a subordinate! How would she like to live with her as a subordinate—a servant, it may be said. Hot tears came into her eyes with a gush as they fell on the signature, "Lulu Clifton."

All ready, she sat down and waited the signal of departure. The day came at last.

It was a foggy afternoon, gray with the coming night, when she arrived at Barrington. Once more she was whirling along the familiar road. She saw Judge Osborne's house; she saw other marks which she knew well, and once more she saw her old home, the dear old house, for the carriage had turned into the avenue. The carriage stopped at the steps, and her sight momentarily left her. Would

Mr. Clifton come to the carriage to help her out? The hall door was opened, and there gushed forth a blaze of light.

CHAPTER XXX.

Two men-servants stood in the flood of light from the open door. One advanced to assist Hazel to alight, and then busied himself with her baggage. As she ascended to the hall she recognized John. Strange, indeed, did it seem not to say, "How are you, John?" but to meet him as a stranger. For a moment she was at a loss for words. What should she say, or ask, coming to her own home? Her manner was embarrassed, her voice low.

"Is Mrs. Clifton within?"

"Yes, ma'am."

At that moment Sally came forward to meet her.

"It is Madame Septier, I believe?" she respectfully said.

"Please to step this way, madame."

But Hazel lingered in the hall, ostensibly to see that her things came in right—in reality, to gain a short respite, for Sally might be about to usher her into the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Clifton.

Sally, however, did nothing of the kind, she merely conducted her to the gray parlor; a fire was burning in the grate, looking cheerful on the autumn night.

"This is your sitting-room, madame. What would you like. I will order it while I show you your sleeping-room."

"A cup of tea and some toast," answered Hazel.

Sally rang the bell, ordered the refreshments to be made ready and sent to the gray parlor, and then preceded Hazel upstairs. On she followed, her heart palpitating; passed the rooms that used to be hers, along the corridor, toward the second staircase. The doors of her old bed and dressing-rooms stood open, and she glanced in with a yearning look. No, nevermore, nevermore could they be hers; she had put them from her by her own free act and deed. Not less comfortable did they look now than in former days; but they had passed into another's occupancy. The fire in the grate blazed on the furniture; on the sofa lay a shawl and a book, and on the bed a silk dress, as if thrown there after being taken off. No, these rooms were not for her now, and she followed Sally up the other staircase.

The bedroom to which she was shown was commodious and well furnished. It was the one Miss Clifton had occupied when she, Hazel, had been taken as a bride to the Barrington estate, though that lady had subsequently quitted it for one on the lower floor.

"Would you like a fire lighted here, madame, for to-night? Perhaps it will feel welcome, after traveling."

"Oh, no, thank you," was the answer.

"Can I do anything for you, madame?" she asked. "Should you want any one, please to ring, and Martha will come up," said Sally, preparing to retire. "She is the maid who waits upon the gray parlor, and will do anything you like up here." With this Sally quitted the room.

Hazel slowly took off her things. There was little fear of detection, so effectually was she disguised. It was with the utmost difficulty she kept tranquil; had the tears once burst forth they would have gone on to hysterics, without the possibility of control. The coming home again to the Barrington estate! Oh, it was a time of terrible painful agitation.

There was no excuse for lingering longer, and she descended. Everything was ready in the gray parlor for her lonely tea. She sat down with what appetite she might have, her brain, her thoughts, all in a chaos together. She wondered whether Mr. and Mrs. Clifton were at dinner; she wondered in what part of the house were the children; she heard bells ringing now and then; she heard servants cross and recross the hall. Her tea over, she rang her own.

A neat-looking, good-tempered maid answered it—Martha, who, as Sally had informed her, was at the governess's especial command. She took away the tea-things, and then Hazel sat alone—for how long she scarcely knew—when a sound caused her heart to beat as if it would burst its bounds, and she started from her chair as one who had received an electric shock. It was nothing to be startled at—for ordinary people, it was but the sound of children's voices. Her children! Were they being brought in to her? She pressed her hand upon her heart. No; they were but walking through the hall, and the voices died away up the wide stairs. She looked at her new watch—half past seven. Her new watch. The old one had been changed for it. John entered.

"My mistress says, ma'am, she would be glad to see

you, if you are not too tired. Will you please to walk into the drawing-room?"

A mist swam before her eyes. Was she about to enter the presence of Mr. Clifton? Had the moment really come? She moved to the door which John held open. She turned her head from the man, for she could feel how ashy white were her face and lips.

"Is Mrs. Clifton alone?" she asked, in a subdued tone. The most indirect way she could put the question as to whether Mr. Clifton was there.

"Quite alone, madame. Mr. Clifton is dining out to-day."

"Madame Septier," said John to his mistress, as he ushered in Hazel.

The old familiar drawing-room; its large, handsome proportions, its well-arranged furniture, its bright chandelier! It all came back to her with a heart-sickness.

Seated under the blaze of the chandelier was Lulu. Not a day older did she look than when Hazel had first seen her at the church, when she had inquired of her husband who was that pretty girl. "Lulu Osborne," he had answered. Ay! She was Lulu Osborne then, but now she was Lulu Clifton.

Inexpressibly more beautiful looked Lulu than Hazel had ever seen her, or else she fancied it. Her evening dress was of pale blue—no other color suited Lulu so well, and there was no other she was so fond of—and on her fair neck was a gold chain and on her arms were gold bracelets. Her pretty features were as attractive as ever, her cheeks were flushed, her blue eyes sparkled, and her light hair was rich and abundant. A contrast, her hair to that of the worn woman opposite her.

Lulu came forward, her hand stretched out with a kindly greeting.

"I hope you are not very much tired after your journey?"

Hazel murmured something, she did not know what, and pushed the chair set for her as much as possible in the shade.

"You are not ill, are you?" asked Lulu, noticing the intensely pale face—as much as could be seen of it for cap and spectacles.

"Not ill," was the low answer, "only a little fatigued."

"Would you prefer that I should speak to you in the morning? You would like, possibly, to retire at once."

But this Hazel declined. Better get the first interview over by gas-light than by daylight.

"You look so very pale, I feared you might be ill."

"I am generally pale; sometimes remarkably so; but my health is good."

"Sister Agatha wrote us word that you would be quite sure to suit us," freely spoke Lulu. "I hope you will, and I hope you may find your residence here agreeable. You are no doubt aware that the children you are to teach are not mine; they are Mr. Clifton's by his first wife."

"Are the children much with you?" inquired Hazel.

"No; I never was fond of being troubled with children. When I first came to the Barrington estate I found the governess who was here then was doing everything necessary for Mr. Clifton's children. You will have the entire charge of the little girl; she will be your companion out of school hours. Do you understand that?"

"I am quite willing and ready to undertake it," said Hazel, her heart fluttering. "Are the children well? Do they enjoy good health?"

"Quite so. They had the measles in the spring, and the illness left a cough upon Frank, the eldest boy. Our doctor says he will outgrow it."

"Has he it still, then?"

"At night and morning. They went last week to spend the day with their aunt Fannie, and were a little late in returning home. It was foggy, and the boy coughed dreadfully after he came in. Mr. Clifton was so concerned that he left the dinner-table and went up to the nursery; he gave Sally strict orders that the child should never again be out in the evening air, so long as the cough was upon him like that."

A bitter groan nearly escaped Hazel's lips. Just then the sound of carriage wheels was heard, and in a moment Hazel found herself once more in the presence of her husband.

He did not perceive that any one was present, and he bent his head and fondly kissed his wife. Hazel's jealous eyes were turned upon them. She saw Lulu's passionate, lingering kiss in return. She heard her fervent whispered greeting, "My darling!" and she watched him turn to press the same fond kisses on the rosy, open lips of his

child. Hazel flung her hands over her face. Had she bargained for this? It was part of her cross.

Mr. Clifton came forward and saw her. He looked somewhat surprised.

"Madame Septier," said Lulu; and he held out his hand and welcomed her in the same cordial, pleasant manner that his wife had done. She put her shaking hand in his. There was no help for it. Little thought he that that hand had been tenderly clasped in his a thousand times, and that it was the one he had loved so dearly. She sat down on her chair again, unable to stand, feeling as though every drop of blood within her had left her body; it had certainly left her face.

"You are at home soon, Harold," Lulu exclaimed. "I did not expect you so early."

"I excused myself just to get home to you, my dear. Young gentleman, I should like to know what brings you up, and here, at this hour?"

"You may well ask," said Lulu. "I had him brought down as you were not here, thinking he would be asleep very soon. And only look at him! no more sleep in his eyes than in mine!"

She would have pressed him to her as she spoke, but the youngster stoutly repudiated it. He set a half cry, and struggled his arms and head free again, crowing the next moment most impudently. Mr. Clifton took him.

"It is no use, Lulu; he is beyond your coaxing this evening;" and he tossed the child in his strong arms, held him up to the chandelier, made him bob at the baby in the pier-glass, until the rebel was in an ecstasy of delight. Finally he smothered his face with kisses as Lulu had done. Lulu rang the bell.

Oh! can you imagine what it was for, Hazel? So had he tossed, so had he kissed her children, she standing by, the fond, proud, happy mother, as Lulu was standing now. Mr. Clifton came up to her.

"Are you fond of these little troubles, Madame Septier? This one is a fine fellow, they say."

"Very fine. What is his name?" she replied, by way of saying something.

"Albert."

"Albert Harold," put in Lulu to Madame Septier. "I was vexed that his name could not be entirely Harold, but

that was already monopolized. Is it you, Cora? I don't know what you'll do with him, but he looks as if he would not be asleep by twelve o'clock."

Cora satisfied her curiosity by taking another prolonged stare at Madame Septier, received the baby from Mr. Clifton, and departed with him.

Madame Septier arose. Would they excuse her? she asked in a low tone; she was tired and would be glad to retire to rest.

"Is she not funny looking?" said Lulu, when she was alone with Mr. Clifton. "I can't think why she wears those blue glasses; it can not be for her sight, and they are very disfiguring."

"She puts me in mind of—of—" began Mr. Clifton, in a dreamy tone.

"Of whom?"

"Her face, I mean," he said, still dreaming.

"So little can be seen of it," returned Mrs. Clifton.

"Of whom does she put you in mind?"

"I don't know. Nobody in particular," returned he, rousing himself. "Let us have some music, Lulu."

CHAPTR XXXI.

THE next morning she dressed with care, and descended to the gray parlor. The two elder children and the breakfast were waiting. Sally left the room when she entered it.

A graceful girl of eight years old, a fragile boy a year younger, both bearing her own once lovely features, her once bright and delicate complexion, her large, soft, brown eyes. How utterly her heart yearned to them, but there must be no scene. Nevertheless, she stooped and kissed them both; one kiss each of impassioned fervor. Ethel was naturally silent. Frank was talkative.

"You are our new governess?" said he.

"Yes; we must be good friends."

"Do you always take bread and milk for breakfast?" she inquired, perceiving that to be what they were eating.

"We get tired of it sometimes, and then we have milk and water, and bread and butter or honey. It's Aunt Fannie who thinks we should eat bread and milk for breakfast; she says papa never had anything else when he was a boy."

Ethel looked up.

"Papa would give me an egg when I breakfasted with him," she cried, "and Aunt Fannie said it was not good for me; but papa gave it me, all the same. I always had breakfast with him."

"And why do you not now?" asked Hazel.

"I don't know. I have not since mamma come. I wish our own mamma was here," pursued Ethel.

"Do you love this one as you did the other?" breathed Hazel.

"Oh, I loved mamma! I loved mamma!" uttered Ethel, clasping her hands.

"Do you love your new mamma?" almost passionately asked Hazel.

Ethel shook her head.

"Not as I love mamma. Poor mamma is dead, and papa said we should never see her again. And he cried, oh! so hard when he told us."

Sally entered to show the way to the school-room, and they followed her upstairs. As Hazel stood at the window, she saw Mr. Clifton depart on his way to the office. Lulu was with him, hanging fondly on his arm, about to accompany him to the park gates. So had she fondly hung, so had she accompanied him in the days gone by.

Through the day Frank's coughing would send pang after pang through Hazel's heart. Her boy, her darling boy, to suffer and she not daring to give him a mother's care and loving sympathy.

Evening came at last—an evening to herself in the gray parlor—a terrible evening; one made up of grief, and bitter sorrow, and rebellion at existing things. Between nine and ten she dragged herself upstairs, purposing to retire to rest.

As she was about to enter her room one of the maids who assisted in the nursery was passing, and a sudden thought occurred to Hazel.

"In which room does Master Clifton sleep?" she asked.

"Is it on this floor?"

The girl pointed to a door near.

"In there, ma'am."

Hazel watched her down-stairs, and then entered the room softly. A little white bed, and Frank's beautiful face lying on it. His cheeks were flushed, his hands were

thrown out, as if with inward fever; but he was sleeping quietly. By the bedside stood a saucer, with some currant jelly in it, and a tea-spoon; there was also a glass of water. She glided down upon her knees and let her face rest on the bolster beside him, her breath in contact with his. Her eyes were wet; but that she might wake him, she would have taken the sleeper on to her bosom, and caressed him there. Death for him? She could hardly believe it.

"Oh, my! Seeing a light here, if I didn't think the room was on fire. It did frighten me."

It was Cora, who had seen the light in passing the door. Hazel sprung up as though she had been shot. She feared the detection of Cora and Sally more than she feared that of Mrs. Clifton.

"I am looking at Master Frank," she said, as calmly as she could speak. "Mr. Clifton appears somewhat uneasy respecting his cough. He has a flushed, delicate look."

"It is nothing," returned Cora. "It's just the look that his mother had. The first time I saw her nothing would convince me but what she had got paint on."

"Good-night," was all the reply made by Hazel, as she retreated to her own room.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"WOULD you be so good, sir, as to come and look at Frank?" asked Mme. Septier, in a low tone of Mr. Clifton.

"Certainly."

"What for?" said Lulu.

"He looks so very ill. I fear he is worse than we thought."

They went to the gray parlor, all three of them. Mr. Clifton was there first, and had taken a long silent look at Frank before the others entered.

"What is he doing on the floor?" exclaimed Lulu, in her astonishment. "He should not lie on the floor, Madame Septier."

"He lies down there at this hour, and I can not get him up again. I try to persuade him to go on the sofa, but it is no use."

Frank opened his eyes.

"Who's that? Papa?"

"Don't you feel well, Frank?"

"Oh, yes, I am very well; but I am tired."

"Why do you lie down here?"

"I like lying here. Papa, that pretty white rabbit of mine is dead."

"Indeed. Suppose you get up and tell me all about it."

"I don't know about it myself yet," said Frank, slowly rising. "Phil told Ethel when she was out just now; I did not go, I was tired."

"What has tired you?" interrupted Mr. Clifton, taking the boy's hand.

"Oh, nothing. I am always tired."

"Do you tell the doctor that you are tired?"

"No. Why should I tell him? I wish he would not order me to take that nasty medicine."

"But it is to make you strong, my boy."

"It makes me sick. I always feel sick after it, papa. Madame Septier says I ought to have cream. That would be nice."

"Cream?" repeated Mr. Clifton, turning to madame.

"I have known cream to do a vast deal of good in a case like Frank's," she observed. "I believe that no better medicine can be given; that it has, in fact, no substitute."

"It can be tried," said Mr. Clifton. "I shall call in further advice for him, madame. Pray give your orders for anything you think may be beneficial to him," added Mr. Clifton as he and his wife were leaving the gray parlor.

Miss Clifton was standing at her own window the next day, when she caught sight of a string of judges and other notable people who came out of the office of Mr. Clifton. So many of them were they, that Miss Clifton involuntarily thought of a conjurer flinging flowers out of a hat; the faster they came, the more it seemed they are to come.

"What on earth's up?" cried she, pressing her nose flat against the pane that she might see the better.

They filed off, some one way, some another. Miss Clifton's curiosity was keener than her appetite, for she remained at the window, although just informed that her dinner was served. Presently Mr. Clifton appeared, and she knocked on the window with her knuckles. He did not hear it; he had turned off at a quick pace toward his home.

The clerks came out next, one after another, and the last

was Mr. Faber. He was less hurried than Mr. Clifton had been, and heard Fannie's signal.

"What in the name of wonder did all those people want at the office?" began she, when Mr. Faber had entered, in obedience to it.

"That was the deputation, Miss Clifton. The deputation to Mr. Clifton. They want him for their new mayor."

"Mayor of what?" cried she, not guessing at the actual meaning.

"Why, Barrington is going to have a mayor, and they have nominated Mr. Clifton, of which I am very glad."

Two or three days more, and the address of Mr. Clifton to the inhabitants of Barrington appeared in the local papers, while the walls and posts convenient were embellished with various colored placards: "Vote for Clifton! Clifton forever!"

In all this time what had become of Captain Redmond St. Clare. While he was recovering from the few bruises he had received in the railroad accident, his uncle died, leaving him a vast sum of money which he had by this time squandered, and it was the next day after the Clifton posters were out, to the surprise and wonder of all, other posters went up, naming Redmond St. Clare as opposing candidate for mayor.

Barrington was in a state of excitement that had not been its lot for many a year. Excitement and indignation had taken possession of Barrington. How the people rallied around Mr. Clifton! Town and surrounding country were alike up in arms. But government business was rife at Barrington, and, whatever the private and public feeling might be, collectively or individually, many votes would be cast for St. Clare.

"Harold, I do fear I have done a foolish thing."

He laughed.

"I fear we all do that at times, Lulu. What is it?"

He had seated himself in one of Lulu's favorite low chairs, and she stood before him, leaning on his shoulder, her face a little behind, so that he could not see it. In her delicacy she would not look at him while she spoke what she was going to speak.

"It is something that I have had on my mind for years, and I did not like to tell it to you."

"For years?"

"You remember the night, years ago, when Tom was at the grove of trees in disguise? He—"

"Which night, Lulu? He came more than once."

"The night—the night that Hazel quitted this house," she answered. "Tom came back after his departure, saying that he had met Tilford in the side road. He described the peculiar motion of his hand as he threw back his hair from his brow; he spoke of the white hand and the diamond ring, how it glittered in the moonlight. Do you remember?"

"I do."

"The motion appeared perfectly familiar to me, for I had seen it repeatedly used by one staying at Barrington. I wondered you did not recognize it. From that night I had little doubt as to the identity of Tilford. I believed that he and Captain St. Clare were one."

A pause.

"Why did you not tell me so, Lulu?"

"I can hardly tell you why! But to-day, as I was passing the opposite party's headquarters, in the carriage, going very slowly on account of the crowd, he was perched out there addressing the people, and I saw the very same action, the old action that I remember so well."

Lulu paused. Mr. Clifton did not interrupt her.

"I feel a conviction that they are the same; that Tom must have been under some unaccountable mistake in saying he knew Redmond St. Clare. I feel so sure that St. Clare and Tilford are one."

"I know they are," he quietly said.

Lulu, in her astonishment, drew back and stared at him in the face—a face of severe dignity.

"Oh, Harold! did you know it all that time?"

"I did not know it until this afternoon. I never suspected it."

"I wonder you did not. I have wondered often."

"So do I—now. Faber, Stafford, and Gurdy Hood—who came home to-day—were standing before the speakers' stand, listening to his speech, when Hood recognized him—not as St. Clare—he was infinitely astonished to find he was St. Clare. St. Clare, they say, was scared at the recognition, and changed color. Hood would give no explanation, and moved away, but Stafford told Faber that

St. Clare was the man Tilford who used to be after Kate Truesdell."

"How did he know?" breathlessly asked Lulu.

"Because Mr. Stafford was after Kate himself, and repeatedly saw Tilford in the woods. Lulu, I believe now that it was St. Clare who killed Truesdell, but I should like to know what Hood had to do with it."

Lulu clasped her hands.

"How strange it is!" she exclaimed, in some excitement. "Mamma told me yesterday that she was convinced some discovery was impending relative to the murder. She had one of her dreams. She was very ill from it."

"One would think you did also, Lulu, by your vehemence."

"No, no; you know better. But it is strange—you must acknowledge that it is—that, sure as anything fresh happens touching the subject of murder, so sure is a troubled dream the forerunner of it. Hood denied to you that he knew Tilford."

"I know he did."

"And now it turns out that he does know him, and he is always in mamma's dreams—none more prominent in them than Hood. But, Harold, I am not telling you what I did. I have sent for Tom."

"You have?"

"I felt sure that St. Clare was Tilford; I did not suspect that others would recognize him, and I acted on the impulse of the moment and wrote to Tom, telling him to be here on Saturday evening. The letter is gone."

"Well, we must shelter him as best we can."

"Harold, dear Harold, what can be done to clear him?"

"It is a case encompassed with difficulties," said Mr. Clifton.

"Let us wait till Tom comes."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

IN the gray parlor, in the dark shadow of the April evening, for it was getting on into night, were Frank Clifton and Hazel. It had been a warm day, but the spring evenings were chilly, and a fire burned in the grate. There was no blaze, the red embers were smoldering and half

dead. Frank lay on the sofa, and Mme. Septier sat by looking at him. Her glasses were off, for the tears wetted them continually, and it was not the recognition of the children that she feared. Presently Frank opened his eyes.

"How long will it be before I die?"

The words took her utterly by surprise, and her heart went round in a whirl.

"What do you mean, Frank? Who said anything about your dying?"

"Oh, I know; I know by the fuss there is over me. You heard what Martha said the other night?"

"What—when?"

"When she brought in the tea, and I was lying on the rug. I was not asleep, though you thought so. You told her she ought to be more cautious, for I might not have been asleep."

"Martha talks great nonsense sometimes."

"She said I was going fast on to the grave."

"Did she? Nobody minds what she says. She is only a foolish girl. We shall soon have you well, when the warm weather comes."

"Madame Septier."

"Well, my darling?"

"What is the matter with me?"

"Nothing, only you are not strong. When you get strong again you will be as well as ever."

"Then if there's nothing the matter with me, why could not the doctor speak to you before me to-day? Why did he send me out of the room while he told you what he thought? Ah! Madame Septier, I am as wise as you."

"A wise little boy, but mistaken sometimes," she said, from her aching heart.

"It's nothing to die when God loves us, madame. Don't you know that I am going to die?"

"No."

"Then, why have you been grieving since the doctor left, and why do you grieve at all for me? I am not your boy."

The words, the scene altogether, overcame her. She knelt down by the sofa, and her tears burst forth freely.

"There, you see!" cried Frank.

"Oh, Frank! I—I had a little boy of my own once, and when I look at you I think of him, and that is why I cry."

"I know. You have told us of him before. His name was Frank, too."

He lay back on the sofa-pillow, with a weary sigh, and lay in silence. Hazel shaded her face and remained in silence also. Soon she was aroused from it. Frank was in a fit of loud, sobbing tears.

"Oh, I don't want to die! I don't want to die! Why should I go and leave papa and Ethel?"

She hung over him; she clasped her arms round him; her tears, her sobs mingled with his. She whispered to him sweet and soothing words; she placed him so that he might sob out his grief upon her bosom, and in a little while the paroxysm had passed.

"Hark!" exclaimed Frank. "What's that?"

"All in the dark, and your fire going out!" exclaimed Lulu, who had entered.

She hastened to stir the fire and send it in a blaze.

"Who is that on the sofa? Frank, you ought to be in bed."

"Not yet, mamma. I don't want to go yet."

"But it is quite time that you should," she returned, ringing the bell. "To sit up at night is not the way to make yourself strong."

And thus the boy was dismissed.

"Lulu, my dearest!"

The voice was Mr. Clifton's, and she flew off on the wings of love—flew off to her idolized husband, leaving her, who had once been idolized, to her loneliness. She knew well that one word from her or dropping her disguise would separate Lulu and Harold as sure as they were now man and wife in the eyes of the world; but if she did, would he not spurn her from him and remove her children that she might never see them again? She could not do it, she preferred a thousand deaths to that.

A sighing, moaning wind swept round the domains of the Barrington estate, bending the tall poplar-trees in the distance, swaying the oaks and elms nearer, rustling the fine old chestnuts in the park—a melancholy, sweeping, fitful wind. The weather had changed, gathering clouds, seemed to be threatening rain. So at least deemed one way-farer who was journeying on a solitary road that Saturday night—a man in the garb of a sailor, with black hair and whiskers. The glazed hat, brought low upon the brows,

concealed his face still more, and he wore a loose rough jacket and wide rough trousers hitched up with a belt. Bearing steadily on, he struck into the side road already mentioned, and from thence, passing through a small unfrequented gate, he found himself in the grounds of Mr. Clifton.

"Let's see," mused he, as he closed the gate behind him and slipped its bolt. "'The covered walk? That must be near the lilac-trees. Then I must wind round to the right. I wonder if either of them will be there waiting for me?"

Yes. Pacing the covered walk, wrapped in a dark mantle, as if taking an evening stroll (had any one encountered her, which was very unlikely, seeing that it was the most retired spot on the grounds!) was Mrs. Clifton.

"Oh, Tom! my poor brother!"

Locked in a yearning embrace, emotion overpowered both. Lulu sobbed like a child.

"Why have you summoned me here, Lulu? What is the trouble? What has turned up?"

"Tilford has—I think. You would know him again, Tom?"

"Know him!" passionately echoed Tom Osborne.

"Were you aware that a contest for the mayoralty is now going on in Barrington?"

"I saw it in the papers. Clifton against St. Clare. Lulu, how could he think of coming here to oppose Clifton?"

"I don't know. First of all, Tom, tell me how you came to know Captain St. Clare. You said you knew him, and that you had seen him with Tilford."

"So I do know him," answered Tom. "And I saw him with Tilford twice."

"Know him by sight only, I presume? Let me hear how you came to know him."

"He was pointed out to me. I saw Tilford walking arm in arm with a gentleman, and I showed them to the water-man at the cab-stand near by."

"Do you know that fellow?" I asked him, indicating Tilford—for I wanted to come at who he really was.

"I don't know that one," the old man answered, "but the one with him is St. Clare. They are often together—a couple of swells."

"And that was how you got to know St. Clare?"

"That was it," said Tom Osborne.

"Then, Tom, you and the water-man made a mistake between you. He pointed out the wrong one, or you did not look at the right. Tilford is St. Clare."

Tom stared at her with all his eyes.

"Nonsense, Lulu!"

"He is. I have suspected it ever since the night you saw him in the side road. On Thursday I drove past by the speakers' stand when he was addressing the people, and I noticed the action you described of his pushing back his hair and the sparkling diamond ring. On the impulse of the moment I wrote off for you, that you might come and set the doubt at rest. I need not have done so, for when Mr. Clifton returned home that evening, and I acquainted him with what I had done, he told me that Tilford and Redmond St. Clare are one and the same. Gurdy Hood recognized him that same afternoon, and so did Mr. Stafford."

"They would both know him!" cried Tom, eagerly.

"Stafford, I am sure, would; for he was sneaking down to Truesdell's often then, and saw Tilford a dozen times. Gurdy Hood must have seen him also—though he protested he had not."

"Lulu!"

The name was uttered in affright, and Tom plunged amid the trees, for somebody was in sight—a tall, dark form advancing from the end of the walk. Lulu smiled; it was only Mr. Clifton, and Tom emerged again.

"Fears still, Tom!" Mr. Clifton exclaimed, as he shook Tom cordially by the hand. "So you have changed your traveling-costume."

"I couldn't venture here again in the old suit; it had been seen, you said," returned Tom. "I bought this rig-out yesterday, second-hand. Mr. Clifton, Lulu says that St. Clare and that brute Tilford have turned out to be the same."

"They have, Tom, as it appears. Nevertheless, it may be as well for you to take a private view of Tilford before anything is done—as you once did of the other Tilford. It would not do to make a stir and then discover that there was a mistake—that he was not Tilford."

"When can I see him?" asked Tom, eagerly.

"It must be contrived somehow. Were you to hang about the doors of the hotel this evening you'd be sure to get the opportunity, for he is always passing in and out. No one will know you."

"I shall look odd to people's eyes. You don't see many sailors in Barrington."

"Not odd at all. Do you think, Tom, that it will turn out that Gurdy Hood had anything to do with the murder?"

Tom shook his head.

"It was not possible, Mr. Clifton; I have said so all along. But about St. Clare. If I find him to be the man Tilford, what steps can then be taken?"

"That's difficult," said Mr. Clifton.

"Who will set it a-going? Who will move in it?"

"You must, Tom."

"I?" uttered Tom, in consternation. "I move in it?"

"You yourself. Who else is there? I have been thinking it well over."

"Will you not take it upon yourself, Harold?"

"No—being St. Clare," was the quiet reply.

"And what can I do?" wailed poor Tom.

"Your acting in this affair need not put you any the more in jeopardy. You must stay in the neighborhood a few days."

"I dare not," interposed Tom, in a fright.

"Listen, Tom. You must put away these fears. Do you suppose I would advise you for danger? You used to say there was some place a mile or two from here where you could stay in safety."

"And so there is, but I always feel safer away from it."

"There your quarters must be for two or three days at least. I have turned matters over in my own mind, and will tell you what I think should be done, so far as the preliminary step."

"Well, what is it?"

"Apply to Price & Thornton, and get them to take it up."

"Why, Price & Thornton would walk me off to prison as soon as I showed myself!"

"Nothing of the sort, Tom. I do not tell you to go openly to their office as another client would. What I would advise is this: make a friend of Mr. Thornton; he

can be a good man and true if he chooses. Tell the whole story to him in a private place, and ask him whether he will carry it through. If he is fully impressed with the conviction that you are innocent, and the other guilty, as the facts appear to be, he will undertake it. Price need know nothing of the affair at first, and when Thornton puts things in motion he need not know where you are to be found."

"I don't dislike Thornton," mused Tom; "and if he would only give his word to be true, I know he would be. The difficulty will be, who is to get the promise from him?"

"I will," said Mr. Clifton. "I will so far pave the way for you. That done, I am through. Your first move, Tom, must be to go to this place of concealment which you know of, and remain quiet there until Monday. On Monday at dusk be here again. Meanwhile, I will see Thornton. By the way, though, I must hear from yourself that Tilford and St. Clare are one before speaking to Thornton."

"I'll go down to the hotel at once," eagerly cried Tom. "I'll come back here into this walk as soon as I have obtained sight of him."

With the last words he turned and was speeding off, when Lulu caught him.

"You will be so tired, Tom!"

"Tired? Not I."

And away he sped. He reached that part of Barrington where the hotel was situated, and was so far favored by fortune that he had not long to wait. Scarcely had he taken his place outside, when two gentlemen came from it arm in arm. Being the head-quarters of one of the candidates, the idlers of the place thought that they could not do better than make it their head-quarters also. Tom only added one to the rest.

Two gentlemen came out arm in arm. The loiterers raised a feeble shout of "St. Clare forever!" Tom did not join in the shout. The one was Tilford, the other the gentleman who had been with Tilford in New York, pointed out to him, as he believed, as Captain St. Clare.

"Which of those two is St. Clare?" he inquired of a man near where he stood.

"Don't you know? He with the hat off, bowing his thanks to us, is St. Clare."

No need to inquire further. It was Tilford of Tom's memory. His ungloved hand, raised to his hat, was white as ever, and the diamond ring flashed in the gas-light. By the hand and ring alone Tom could have sworn to the man had it been needful.

"Who is the other one?" he continued.

"His name is Scott. Be you for Clifton, sailor, or be you for St. Clare?"

"I am for neither. I am only a stranger passing through the town."

"On the tramp?"

"Tramp? No."

And Tom moved away, to make the best of his progress back to the Barrington estate.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

MR. CLIFTON took his seat in his private room, opened his letters, sorted them, marked on the back of some what was to be the purport of their answers, and then called in Mr. Faber.

Mr. Clifton put the letters in his hands, gave some rapid instructions, and arose.

"Are you in a hurry, Mr. Clifton?"

"They want me at head-quarters. Why?"

"A curious incident occurred to me last evening, sir. I overheard a dispute between St. Clare and Gurdy Hood."

"Indeed," replied Mr. Clifton, who was looking for something in his desk.

"And what I heard would go far to hang St. Clare, if not Hood. As sure as we are here, Mr. Clifton, they hold the secret of Truesdell's murder. If some one would take up Tom Osborne's cause now, he might be proved innocent," added the old man, with a wistful look.

"It is being taken up, Faber."

A pause and a glad look.

"That's the best news I have had for many a day, sir. But my evidence will be necessary in the case."

"I am not taking up the case. Thornton has had a meeting with Tom Osborne, and is now acting for him."

"I will go to their office at once, Mr. Clifton, and inform them of what I overheard," said Mr. Faber.

Merrily arose Barrington on Thursday morning; merrily rang out the bells, clashing and chiming. The street was alive with people; the windows were crowded with heads; something unusual was astir. It was the day of election of the two candidates, and everybody took the opportunity to make a holiday.

Ten o'clock was the time named. But before that hour struck Barrington was crammed. The country people had come in thick and thrèefold, rich and poor, people of note, and people of none, voters and non-voters—all eager to mix themselves up in the day's proceedings. You see, the notorious fact of St. Clare having come forward to oppose Mr. Clifton caused greater interest to be attached to this election. Lulu drove in to Barrington in her carriage, the two children and the governess being with her.

They alighted at the residence of Miss Clifton. Quite a gathering was already there. Miss Clifton was in great grandeur—a brocaded dress and a scarlet bow in front of it the size of a pumpkin.

Mr. Clifton saw them at the windows of the huge upper drawing-room and came in; he was then on his way to the town-hall. Shaking hands, laughter, hearty and hasty good wishes, and he quitted the room again. As he made his appearance in the crowd again some one shouted:

"Clifton and honor forever!"

The ladies laughed and shook their handkerchiefs. The crowd took up the shout till the very air echoed with it.

"A galaxy of beauty!" whispered Mr. Scott, in the ear of Redmond St. Clare. "How the women rally around him! I tell you what, St. Clare, you and the government were stupid to go on with the contest, and I said so days ago. You have no more chance against Clifton than that bit of straw in the air has against the wind. You ought to have withdrawn in time."

"Like a coward!" angrily retorted St. Clare. "No; I'll go on with it to the end."

But ere another word could be spoken, some one in the garb of a policeman, who had made his way through the crowd, laid his hand on St. Clare.

"Captain Redmond St. Clare, you are my prisoner!"

Nothing worse than debt occurred at the moment to the

mind of Captain St. Clare. But that was enough, and he turned purple with rage.

“Your hands off, vermin! How dare you?”

A quick movement, a slight click, a bustle from the wondering crowd more immediately around, and the handcuffs were on. Utter amazement alone prevented Mr. Scott from knocking down the policeman.

“I’m sorry to do it in this public place and manner,” said the officer, “but I couldn’t come across him last night, do as I would. And the warrant has been in my hands since five o’clock yesterday afternoon. Redmond St. Clare, I arrest you for the willful murder of Jacob Truesdell!”

The crowd fell back, almost paralyzed with consternation; the word was passed from one extreme of it to another. Excitement grew high. The ladies, looking from Miss Clifton’s windows, saw what happened, though they could not divine the cause. Some of them turned pale when they saw the handcuffs.

Pale? What was their paleness compared with the frightfully livid hue that disfigured the features of Captain St. Clare? His face was a terror to look upon! Once or twice he gasped as if in an agony, and then his eyes happened to fall on Gurdy Hood, who stood near.

“You hound! It is you who have done this!”

“No, by—”

Whether Gurdy Hood was about to swear by Jupiter or Juno, never was decided, the sentence being ignominiously cut short at the above two words. Another policeman, in the summary manner exercised toward St. Clare, had clapped a pair of handcuffs on him.

“Gurdy Hood, I arrest you as an accomplice in the murder of Jacob Truesdell!”

“I swear that I am innocent!” passionately uttered Gurdy Hood.

“Well, sir, you have only got to prove it,” civilly rejoined the policeman.

Miss Clifton leaned from the window, her curiosity too excited to remain silent longer. Mrs. Osborne was standing by her side.

“What’s the matter?” she asked of the upturned faces immediately beneath.

“Them two, the fine mayor as wanted to be, and young

Hood be arrested for murder," spoke a man's clear voice, in answer. "The story runs as they murdered Truesdell, and then laid it on the shoulders of young Tom Osborne, who didn't do it, after all."

A faint, wailing cry of startled pain, and Lulu flew to Mrs. Osborne, from whom it proceeded.

"Oh! mamma, my dear mamma, take comfort. Do not suffer this to agitate you to illness. Tom is innocent, and it will surely be so proved."

Mr. Clifton had seen the look on Mrs. Osborne's face, and he ran up quickly. Into another room, away from the gay visitors, they got Mrs. Osborne, and Mr. Clifton locked the door to keep them out. Only himself and his wife were with her, except Mme. Septier, who had been dispatched by somebody with a bottle of smelling-salts.

Lulu knelt at her mamma's feet; Mr. Clifton leaned over her, her hands sympathizingly held in his.

"Oh, Harold, tell me the truth! You will not deceive me?" she gasped, in earnest entreaty, the cold dew gathering on her pale, gentle face. "Is the time come to prove my boy's innocence?"

"It is."

"Is it possible that it can be that false, bad man who is guilty?"

"From my soul I believe him to be," replied Mr. Clifton, glancing round to make sure that none should hear the assertion save those present. "Dear Mrs. Osborne, take courage, take comfort; happier days are coming round. Take care of her, my darling," Mr. Clifton whispered to his wife. "Don't leave her. I beg pardon, madame."

His hand had touched Mme. Septier's neck in turning round. He unlocked the door and regained the street, while Mme. Septier sat down with her beating and rebellious heart.

Amid the shouts, the jeers, and the escort of the mob, St. Clare and Hood were lodged in the station-house. Never was so mortifying an interruption known. So thought St. Clare's party. And they deemed it well, after some consultation among themselves, to withdraw his name as a candidate.

After the short work the officers had made of St. Clare, many of his party went over to the Clifton side. Loud and long were the shouts of "Honor and Clifton forever!"

CHAPTER XXXV.

A PLEASANT party it was at the Barrington estate the night after the election, and twelve o'clock struck before the last carriage of guests drove away. It might have been one or two hours after that, and the house steeped in moonlight and quietness, everybody being abed and asleep, when a loud, alarming summons at the hall bell echoed through the stillness.

The first to put her head out of the window was Cora.

"Is it fire?" shrieked she, in the most excessive state of terror conceivable. Cora had a natural dread of fire—some people possess this dread more than others—and had oftentimes aroused the house to a commotion by declaring that she smelled it. "Is it fire?" shrieked Cora.

"Yes," was shouted at the very top of a man's voice, who stepped from the entrance pillars to answer.

Cora waited for no more. Clutching at the baby with one hand and little Harold with the other, out she flew to the corridor, screaming "Fire! fire! fire!" in every accent of horror. Into Frank's room, and dragging him out of bed; into Ethel's, and dragging her out; banging open the door of Mme. Septier's room, and the shrieks, "Fire! fire! fire!" never ceasing. Cora, with the four children, burst unceremoniously into the sleeping apartment of Mr. and Mrs. Clifton. By this time the children, terrified out of their senses, not at Cora's cry of alarm, but at the summary propelling down-stairs, set up a shrieking too. Mme. Septier, believing that half of the house at least was in flames, was the next to appear, throwing on a shawl she had caught up, and then came Sally.

"Fire! fire! fire!" shouted Cora. "We're all being burned up together!"

Poor Mrs. Clifton, thus wildly aroused from sleep, sprung out of bed and into the corridor in her night-dress. And when Mr. Clifton, who had stopped to put on some of his clothes, came out and found that his wife in her haste had fallen down half a flight of stairs, he cast a rapid glance down the hall, and saw no fire, and no signs of any. He hastened to his wife, who was struggling to her feet.

Everybody round him was shrieking in concert, making

the confusion and din terrific. The bright moonlight streamed in at the corridor windows, but there was no other light.

"Where is the fire?" he asked. "I don't smell any. Who gave the first alarm?"

The bell answered him—the hall bell, which rang out ten times louder and longer than before. He opened one of the windows and leaned from it.

"Who's there?"

Mme. Septier caught up little Harold.

"It's me, sir," responded a voice, which he at once recognized to be that of one of Mr. Osborne's men-servants. "Mr. Osborne is in a fit, sir, and Mrs. Osborne sent me for you and Mrs. Clifton. You must please make haste, sir, if you want to see him alive!"

"You, James? Is the house on fire—this house?"

"Well, I don't know, sir. I can hear a dreadful deal of screeching in it."

Mr. Clifton closed the window. He began to suspect that the danger lay in fear alone.

"Who told you there was a fire?" he demanded of Cora.

"That man ringing at the door," sobbed Cora. "Thank goodness, I have saved the children!"

Mr. Clifton was exasperated at the mistake. His wife was trembling from head to foot, and he knew that she must be hurt from the fall down the stairs, and she was not in a condition to be alarmed. She clung to him in terror, asking if they could escape.

"My darling, be calm. There is no fire. It is a stupid mistake. You may all go back to bed and sleep in peace," he added to the rest. "And the next time you alarm the house in the night, Cora, have the goodness to make yourself sure, first of all, that there's cause for it."

Lulu, frightened still, bewildered, and uncertain, full of pain, escaped to the window and threw it open. But Mr. Clifton was nearly as quick as she; he caught her to him with one hand, and drew the window down with the other. To have these tidings told to her abruptly would be worse than all. By this time some of the servants had descended the other stairs with a light (being in various stages of costume), and hastening to open the hall door, James entered.

Lulu caught sight of him ere Mr. Clifton could prevent it, and grew still worse with fear, believing some ill had happened to her mother.

Drawing her inside their room, he broke the news to her soothingly and tenderly, making light of it.

"Now, my dear, go back to bed, and I will hasten to see your papa."

At that time Lulu recollected Frank—strange that she should be the first to do so—before Hazel or Mr. Clifton. She ran out again to the corridor, where the boy stood shivering.

"He may have caught his death!" she uttered, snatching him up in her arms. "Oh, Cora! what have you done? His night-robe is damp and cold."

Unfit as she was for the burden, she bore him to her own bed.

"Just feel his night-robe, Harold! Cora—"

A shrill cry of awful terror interrupted the words, and Mr. Clifton made but one bound out again. Lulu dropped helpless to the floor. She could stand no more.

Cora, with the baby and Ethel, had already disappeared up the stairs, and Mme. Septier was disappearing. Sally stood holding on to the balustrades, her face ghastly, her mouth open, her eyes fixed in horror—altogether an object to look upon.

"Why, Sally, what is the matter with you?" cried Mr. Clifton. "You look as if you had seen a ghost."

"Oh!" she wailed, "I have seen one."

"Are you all going deranged together?" retorted he, wondering what had come to the house. "Seen a ghost, Sally?"

Sally fell on her knees, as if unable to support herself, and crossing her shaking hands upon her chest. Had she seen ten ghosts, she could not have betrayed more dire distress. She was a sensible and faithful servant, one not given to flights of fancy, and Mr. Clifton gazed at her in amazement.

"Sally, what is this?" he asked, bending down and speaking kindly.

"Oh, Mr. Clifton! Heaven have mercy upon us all!" was the inexplicable answer.

"Sally, I ask you what is the matter?"

She made no reply. She rose up, shaking, and taking

little Harold's hand, slowly proceeded toward the stairs, low moans breaking from her, the boy's naked feet pattering on the carpet.

Frank's voice was heard calling his papa to come to Lulu. Mr. Clifton was filled with alarm; he gently lifted his wife up and placed her on the bed; he applied such restoratives as he had on hand, but it was some time before she fully regained consciousness.

"What was it?" whispered Lulu.

"Cora's folly has turned the house topsy-turvy. If you are quite sure you feel better, dearest, I will hasten to see what is the trouble at your father's house."

"Do, with all speed, Harold dear! I think I will rest better as soon as I hear what it is."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

EIGHT months have passed since the night of the false alarm of fire. And what had the months brought forth since the election of Mr. Clifton as Mayor of Barrington? Be you very sure they had not been without their events.

Judge Osborne's illness had turned out to be a stroke of paralysis. People can not act with unnatural harshness and impunity toward a child, and then discover they have been in the wrong. Thus it proved with Judge Osborne. He was recovering, but would never again be the man he had been. The fright when James had gone to tell of his illness at Mr. Clifton's had proved the death-blow to poor Lulu. It was not many weeks after that Mr. Clifton stood by the open grave of his second wife and baby girl.

Ah, me! once more the Barrington estate was shrouded in sorrow. Who would be the next? was the uppermost thought in Mr. Clifton's mind. Perhaps he. Was not his heart bowed down with sorrow? And what relief to lie down to rest in the grave with his pretty wife and child.

Frank had caught cold, which brought increased malady to the lungs, and Sally seemed to have caught fear. She went about more like one in a dream than awake, would be buried in a reverie for an hour at a time, and if suddenly spoken to would start and shiver.

But Frank was rapidly fading away. The physicians had given him up, and it was evident to all that the end could not be long in coming.

Thin, haggard, pale, looked St. Clare when his case came up for trial. His incarceration had not in any way contributed to his personal advantage, and there was an ever-recurring expression of dread upon his countenance not pleasant to look upon. The most eminent counsel were engaged on both sides.

Tom Osborne was the first called. He came forward, a fair, placid young man, with blue eyes, fair hair, and a pleasant countenance. He had resumed his original position in life, so far as attire went, and in that, at least, was a gentleman again.

A strange hubbub arose in court. Tom Osborne, the exile, the reported dead man! The spectators arose with one accord to get a better view; they stood on tiptoe; they put forth their necks, and amid the noisy hum the groan bursting from the lips of Judge Osborne was unnoticed. Two officers moved quietly up and stood behind the witness. Tom Osborne was in custody, though he might know it not. The witness was sworn.

"What is your name?"

"Thomas Osborne."

"Son of Judge Osborne, I believe, of Barrington?"

"His only son."

"The same against whom a verdict of willful murder is out?"

"The same, judge," replied Tom, who appeared, strange as it may seem, to have cast away all his old fear.

"Then, witness, let me warn you that you are not obliged to answer any question that might tend to criminate yourself."

"Judge," answered Tom, with some emotion, "I wish to answer any and every question put to me. I have but one hope—that the full truth of all pertaining to that fatal evening may be made manifest this day."

"Look round at the prisoner," said the examining counsel. "Do you know him?"

"I know him now as Captain Redmond St. Clare. Up to last April I believed his name was Tilford."

There was not much delay in examining the witnesses one after the other, and the case for the prosecution closed. An able and ingenious speech was made for the defense, the learned counsel who offered it contending that there was still no proof of Redmond St. Clare having been the

guilty man. Neither was there any proof that the catastrophe was not the result of pure accident. A loaded gun, standing against the wall in a small room, was not a safe weapon, and he called on the jury not rashly to convict on the certainty, but to give the prisoner the benefit of the doubt. The judge summed up. Certainly not in the prisoner's favor—but to use the expression of some among the audience—dead against him.

The jury was a very short time absent. The prisoner was the color of marble when the jury filed in. There was profound silence in the court-room.

"How say you, gentlemen of the jury? Guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty!"

It was a silence to be felt, and the prisoner gasped convulsively once or twice.

"But," added the foreman, "we wish to recommend him to mercy."

"On what grounds?" inquired the judge.

"Because we believe that it was not a crime planned by the prisoner beforehand, but arose from the bad passions of the moment, and was so committed."

The judge paused.

"Prisoner at the bar! Have you anything to urge why the sentence of death should not be passed upon you?"

The prisoner clutched the front of the dock. He threw up his head, as if shaking off the dread fear which had oppressed him.

"Only this: The jury, in giving their reason for recommending me to your mercy, have adopted the right view of the case as it actually occurred. When I quitted the girl Kate, and went to the cottage for my hat, I no more contemplated injuring mortal man than I contemplate it at this moment. He was there—the father. In the dispute that ensued the catastrophe occurred. It was not willful murder."

"Prisoner at the bar, you have been convicted by clear and undoubted evidence of the crime of willful murder. The jury have pronounced you guilty, and in their verdict I entirely coincide. That you took the life of that ill-fated and unoffending man there is no doubt; you have yourself confessed it. Uncalled, unprepared, and by you unpitied, you hurried that poor man into eternity, and you must now

expiate the crime with your life. The jury have recommended you to mercy. It now remains for me to pass upon you the dread sentence of the law. It is that you, Redmond St. Clare, be taken back to the place whence you came, and thence to the place of execution, and that you be there hanged by the neck until you are dead."

The court was cleared. The day's excitement was over. Tom was discharged.

Tom—poor, ill-used Tom, was a free man again.

Then ensued the scene of all scenes. With one universal shout, with one bound, they rallied round Tom. They congratulated him, they overwhelmed him with good wishes. Had he possessed a hundred hands they would have been shaken off.

And when Tom extricated himself, and turned in his pleasant, forgiving, loving nature to his father, the stern old judge, forgetting his pride and pomposity, burst into tears and sobbed like a child, as he murmured something about he also wanting forgiveness.

"Dear father," cried Tom, his own eyes wet, "it is forgiven and forgotten already. Think how happy we shall be again together—you and I and my mother."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

By the side of little Frank Clifton's bed knelt Mme. Septier. The time was at hand, and the boy was quite reconciled to his fate. The brilliant hectic type of the disease had gone from his cheeks, his features were white and wasted, and his eyes large and bright.

"Madame Septier?"

"What, my darling?"

"Do you think my own dear mamma will be up there?"

"Ay! Ere long."

"But how shall I know her? You see, I have nearly forgotten what she was like."

She leaned over him, laying her forehead upon his wasted arm. She burst into a flood of impassioned tears.

"You will know her, never fear, Frank; she has not forgotten you."

It was seven o'clock that evening when Mr. Clifton returned home and came into Frank's room. The boy brightened up at the well-known presence.

“Papa!”

Mr. Clifton sat down on the bed and kissed him. The passing beams of the sun, slanting from the horizon, shone into the room, and Mr. Clifton could view well the dying face. The gray hue of death was certainly on it.

“Is he worse?” he exclaimed hastily to madame.

“He appears worse this evening, sir. More weak.”

“Papa, how shall I know my own mamma in heaven?”

Mr. Clifton did not immediately reply. The question may have puzzled him.

“She will be in heaven, you know.”

“Yes, yes, my child. Poor mamma!”

“Madame Septier knows she will. She saw her abroad, and mamma told her that—what was it, madame?”

Mme. Septier grew sick with alarm. Mr. Clifton turned his eyes upon her scarlet face—as much as he could get to see of it.

“Mamma was more sorry than she could bear,” went on Frank, finding he was not helped. “She wanted you, papa, and she wanted us all, and her heart broke.”

A flush rose to Mr. Clifton’s brow. He turned inquiringly to Mme. Septier.

“I spoke only as I thought it must be. The boy seemed troubled about his mother.”

Mr. Clifton was puzzled more than ever.

“Did you meet his mother abroad? I scarcely understand.”

She lifted her hand to cover her glowing face.

“A long time ago I did.”

Mr. Clifton did not ask any more questions, for he thought there must be some mistake, for the boy’s mother was killed the same night she left his house. Mr. Clifton went toward her.

“Do you perceive the change in his countenance?”

“Yes—yes. He has looked like this since a strange fit of trembling that come on in the afternoon. Cora thought he might be taken for dead. I fear some twenty-four hours will end it.”

Mr. Clifton rested his elbow on the mantel, his head bowed upon his hand.

“It is hard to lose him. Every one goes from me in one way or another, especially those I love best.”

“Oh, he will be better off!” she wailed, choking down

the sobs and the emotion that arose threateningly. "We can bear death, it is not the worst parting that the earth knows. He will be quit of this cruel world—sheltered in heaven. I wish we were all there!"

A servant came for Mr. Clifton. And when he returned to the sick-room the daylight had faded, and a solitary candle was placed where its rays could not fall upon the child's face. Mr. Clifton took the light in his hand to scan that face again. He was lying sideways on the pillow, his hollow breath echoing through the room. The light caused him to open his eyes.

"Don't, papa, please. I like it dark."

"Only for one moment, my precious boy."

And not for more than a moment did Mr. Clifton hold it. The blue, pinched ghastly look was there yet. Death was certainly coming on quickly.

At that moment Ethel and little Harold came in on their return from their visit to Miss Clifton's. The dying boy looked up eagerly.

"Good-bye, Ethel," he said, putting out his cold, damp hand.

She took his little hand, then leaned over and kissed him.

"Good-bye, Frank; but, indeed, I am not going out anywhere."

"I am," said he. "I am going to heaven. Where's Harold?"

Mr. Clifton lifted Harold on to the bed. Ethel looked frightened, Harold surprised.

"Harold, good-bye; good-bye, dear. I am going to heaven; to that bright blue sky, you know. I shall see mamma there, and I'll tell her that you and Ethel are coming soon."

Ethel, a sensitive child, broke into a loud storm of sobs enough to disturb the equanimity of any sober sick-room. Cora hastened in at the sound, and Mr. Clifton sent the two children away, with soothing promises that they should see Frank in the morning, if he continued well enough.

Down on her knees, her face buried in the counterpane, a corner of it stuffed into her mouth, that it might help to stifle her agony, knelt Hazel. The moment's excitement was well-nigh beyond her strength. Her own child—his child; they alone around its death-bed, and she might not ask or receive from him a word of comfort, of consolation!

Lower and lower bent Mr. Clifton over his boy, for his eyes were wet with tears.

The boy nestled himself in his father's arms, and in a few minutes appeared to sleep. Mr. Clifton gently laid him on his pillow, and then turned to depart.

"Oh, papa, papa! say good-bye to me!"

Mr. Clifton's tears fell upon the little upturned face, as he once more caught him to his breast.

"I will not be long, darling. I am going to bring Aunt Fannie to you."

A lingering embrace—a fond, lingering embrace, Mr. Clifton holding him to his beating heart. Then he laid him comfortably on his pillow.

"Good-bye, papa," came forth the little feeble cry.

It was not heard. Mr. Clifton was gone—gone from his living child forever. Up rose Hazel and flung her arms aloft in a storm of sobs.

"Oh, Frank darling, in this dying moment look at me—your mother!"

She heard some one entering, and she sunk into the chair close beside the bed. It was Sally. Advancing with a quiet step she drew aside the clothes to look at Frank.

"Mr. Clifton said he wanted me," she observed. "Why—ah—!"

It was a sharp, momentary cry, subdued as soon as uttered. Hazel sprung forward to Sally's side, looking also. The pale young face lay calm in its utter stillness, the busy little heart had ceased to beat. He had gone to the Good Shepherd.

Then Hazel lost all self-control. She believed that she had reconciled herself to the child's death, that she could part with him without too great emotion. But she had not anticipated it would be quite so soon. She had deemed that some hours would at least be given him, and now the storm overwhelmed her. Crying, sobbing, calling, she flung herself upon him; she clasped him to her; she dashed off her disguising cap, glasses, wig, loose sacque—all! all! all the ugly disguise. There she stood, her beautiful hair falling down her back, the Hazel of old, with sorrow and deep pain printed on her beautiful face. She laid her face upon his, beseeching him to come back to her that he might say farewell to her, his mother, her darling boy, her lost child!

Sally was dreadfully terrified—for she heard Mr. Clifton

coming. He was at that moment at the door of the sick-room. Sally sprung forward. Her face, in her emotion and fear, was of one livid whiteness, and she shook with fear. It was only too apparent in the well-lighted hall.

"Sally!" he exclaimed, in amazement, "what ail's you?"

"Oh, Mr. Clifton!" she panted, "be prepared. Master Frank—his mamma—Master Frank—"

"Sally! Not dead?"

"Alas, yes, sir!"

Mr. Clifton entered the death-chamber, and walked to the bed.

"Oh, my—"

The words failed on his tongue. Did he think, as Sally had once done, that it was a ghost he saw? Certain it is that his face and lips turned the hue of death, and he backed a few steps from the bed on which lay the dead boy, though he was as little given to show emotion as man can be. The falling hair, the sweet, mournful eyes, the flush on her cheeks, which his presence brought there, told too plainly of his long lost Hazel.

"Harold!"

She put out her trembling hands.

He looked at her; he looked round the room, as one does awaking from a dream.

"Hazel! Are you—are you—were you Madame Septier?" he cried, scarcely conscious of what he said.

"Oh, forgive me! I did not die. I got well from that accident. Nobody knew me, and I came here as Madame Septier. I could not stay away. Harold, forgive me!"

His mind was in a whirl; his wits were scared away.

"I could not stay away from you and my children. The longing for you was killing me," she reiterated, wildly, like one talking in a fever. "I never knew a moment's peace after the mad act I was guilty of in quitting you. Over the dead body of our darling boy, I ask you to forgive me, and then I will go away in peace!"

A great load seemed to roll off Mr. Clifton. His beloved wife, that he had mourned for so sincerely, was alive and before him!

He opened his arms and drew Hazel to his bosom, and there at the bedside of their dead child they were reunited again. Mr. Clifton rang for his two children. They were

brought in by Sally. Ethel gave one good look at Hazel, and with a glad cry sprung into her arms. Taking little Harold on her lap, Ethel leaning upon her knee, while her husband pressed her head against him, it was thus Fannie found them when, a few minutes after, she came into the room. Sally had slipped out, and in her delight prepared Miss Clifton ere she entered.

“Child,” said she, drawing near to Hazel, “will you forgive me for my share in driving you away from your home?”

“Yes, freely,” came the answer.

And so we will leave them in their sorrow and their happiness.

“Every good thing that we earnestly seek will come with time, if we always strive to do right unselfishly.”

THE END.

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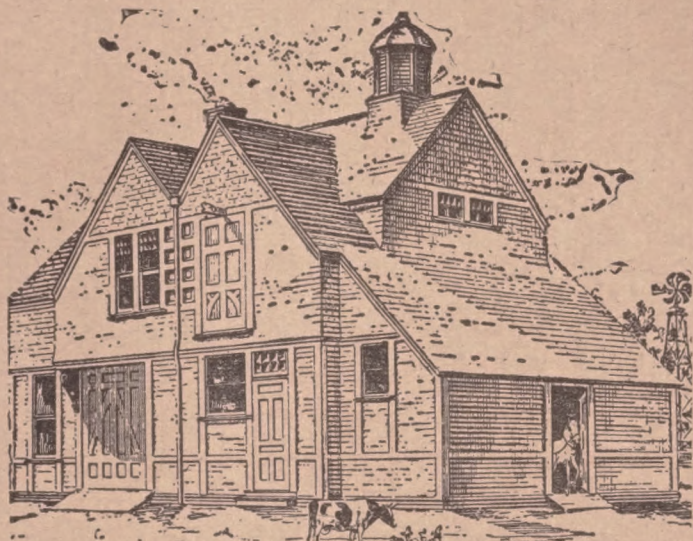
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